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Review

BY CLAUDIA ALARCÓN

Rio's Brazilian at The Vintage Lounge

504-B Trinity, 636-8534
Tuesday-Saturday, 4-10pm; happy hour, 4-7pm

Those talented Brazilian boys from Rio's have found a home for their fabulous foods at the Vintage Lounge, offering both happy hour and dinner menus. A hip nightclub housed in a low-lit, retro-chic space, the Vintage transforms during the day into a full-service restaurant serving Rio's popular Brazilian pastries, salads, and soups, all accompanied by its spicy *malagueta* sauces. Tables set in front of the purple velvet couches are dressed with candles, fresh flowers, and cool black-and-white paisley linens, creating an elegant yet casual atmosphere. Frontman **Ben Googins** provides smiling table service and tends the bar, making seriously great **caipirinhas** as well as a signature **Malaguetini** made with premium vodka and Rio's spicy-sweet original malagueta sauce. Chef **Elias Martins** has the ample kitchen to himself, so he is able to prepare everything from Rio's Downtown Farmers' Market favorite *salgadinhos* to full entrées and exquisite desserts.



Photo by John Anderson

The daily happy hour features both drink and appetizer specials. For a great deal, try the appetizer sampler (\$20), a combo platter featuring *risoli de frango* (chicken-stuffed pastries), beef *kibe*, yucca fries, and the new *bolinho de aipim*, yucca pastries stuffed with smoked Gouda cheese and roasted red peppers, accompanied by Rio's trio of malagueta sauces. (By the way, yucca pastries provide a perfect wheat-free alternative for those with allergies.) On the expanded menu we find soups like traditional *caldo verde* (\$5), made with collard greens and sausage, and fresh, summery salads like the Flamengo (\$4), a zesty creation with hearts of palm, jackfruit, cannellini beans, celery, and roasted red peppers in Champagne vinaigrette. For heartier appetites, try the *inoque de arroz* (\$15), rice gnocchi stuffed with sausage and mozzarella in a tomato-basil sauce, or the *panqueca de ricota caseira e espinafre* (\$16), crepelike pancakes stuffed with house-made ricotta and fresh spinach. Seal the deal with the amazing chocolate-and-passion-fruit mousse (\$8) for an incredible tropical treat.