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FIRST COURSE

TASTY NEWS BITES FOR NORTH JERSEY'S FOOD LOVERS

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■ Haledon's Nicholas Markets offers a Gouda with something extra

If you love Gouda, odds are good you'll become a fan of a somewhat gilded Gouda. Cheeseland, the well-known importer and exporter of Dutch cheeses, offers a fresh **Gouda with Basil and Garlic**, giving the already creamy and smooth taste of Gouda a slightly "earthy taste," says Andrew O'Connell, the new cheese manager of **Nicholas Markets** in Haledon. "It's delicious," he says, adding that it's not always in stock, so call before going. \$10.99 at Nicholas Markets at 401 Haledon Ave., Haledon 973-595-5080; nicholasmarkets.com



■ A dessert to satisfy vegans and non-vegans alike

The vegan-friendly **Artisan Kitchen & Bar** in Hawthorne offers a healthy take on a classic Italian dessert with its **vegan coconut panna cotta** created by in-house pastry chef Tanya Newell. In place of gelatin and cream, she uses agar (a jelly-like substance derived from seaweed) and a blend of coconut and almond milk. Served with toasted coconut and pineapple chips for a nice crunch (and the slightest hint of lemon zest for added flavor), Newell says the dessert is easily digested and, Newell adds, "still manages to satisfy any sweet tooth." (\$9) at Artisan Kitchen & Bar, 142 Goffle Road, Hawthorne 973-310-3333, artisankitchenbar.com.



■ Due dessert puts an Italian spin on a campfire classic

No need to camp in the great outdoors to enjoy Adam Weiss's "s'more" dessert. The chef of critically acclaimed **Due** has taken the campfire classic and put a sophisticated Italian twist on it. The parfait-style dessert is, he said, "layered in a wineglass with semi-frozen chocolate mousse with some cinnamon-scented graham cracker crumbs on the bottom and topped off with house-made marshmallow fluff flavored with honey." He then uses a blow torch for a "campfire" finish. Any wonder it is one of the most popular desserts in the restaurant? \$9 at Due, 18 E. Ridgewood Ave., Ridgewood 201-857-3232; dueridgewood.com.

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■ A smooth companion for your summer get-togethers

For a refreshing summer cocktail that requires no prep work, consider the newly launched **Mija Sangria**, a craft sangria created by the Massachusetts-based **Latitude Beverage Company**. It is packaged in a 25-ounce reusable flip-top glass bottle and made with dry red wine and 100 percent fruit juice (a blend of pomegranate, açai, blood orange and lemon-lime). \$11.99. Purchase soon at select New Jersey wine retailers (because the product is in early roll-out stages, it's recommended to contact your local retailer to check if it is in stock).



■ Banana ice cream with appeal



Unlike many banana ice creams, the one at **Ice Cream by Mike** in Hackensack isn't bright yellow. But it makes up for its drab, dye-free appearance in strikingly fresh flavor. Owner Michael Elias makes it by combining fresh ripe bananas with cream, milk, sugar, egg yolks and vanilla. It's \$3.25 for a single scoop, \$4.50 for a double, \$5 for a triple. While you're there, inquire about the chocolate Cointreau ice cream studded with candied orange – Elias made a small batch and is keeping it in the back for those in the know. Ice Cream by Mike, 163 Main St.; 201-343-4514; facebook.com/icecreambymike.