

DINING IN THE DESERT

Matchbox sparks late-night fun

By Dale McKinney
For Desert Entertainer

Great food, great views and great late night fun have made Matchbox Vintage Pizza Bistro overlooking South Palm Canyon a winning Palm Springs dining spot. Follow the flames hovering overhead at the Mercado plaza (behind the bronze statue of Sony Bono) to an upscale, hip perch on the city's main thoroughfare. A sister restaurant to the Matchbox in Washington, D.C., this trendy eatery is open until 1 a.m. in a town that usually rolls up the sidewalks at 9 p.m.

Its handmade tables are embedded with matchboxes from around the world — from Japanese hotels, past Olympic Games, and antique European boxes and a part of an old barn, uniquely lighted in red, will spark your conversation. Best of all, on a balmy summer night, take a table

Matchbox

4 p.m. to 1 a.m.
155 South Palm Canyon
Mercado Plaza/Second Level
Palm Springs
(760) 778-6000

on the small balconies overlooking Palm Canyon and people watch from your eagle's perch. Or simply sit at the bar and enjoy a drink from a vast selection of California and international wines, boutique and brand-name breweries, as well as clever cocktails. Where else will you find beers with labels like Delirium Tremens and Rogue Dead Guy Ale?

The secret to the awesome pizzas here come from Matchbox's hand-built, wood-burning brick oven — they bake up a thin crust pie with an addictive smoky taste

that can't be beat. Try the Fire & Smoke (all are either \$13 or \$19, depending on the size) with its spicy fire-roasted red peppers, sweet onions, chipotle pepper tomato sauce and smoked Gouda cheese and fresh basil. Of course there's the traditional (but stacked) pepperoni, Portobello mushroom and meat pizza — that offers pepperoni, sweet Italian sausage, crispy bacon, and tomato sauce with mozzarella — but go for the gusto and give the exotic Prosciutto White a taste — with Prosciutto ham, Kalamata olives, fresh garlic, ricotta cheese, extra virgin olive oil and mozzarella, it's awesome.

But pizza is only part of the Matchbox collection. There's Bistro-style entrées like Crab Cakes baked in crisp phyllo dough and served over wilted spinach with roasted pepper remoulade and fresh chives for



Miniburgers, with Gouda and onion straws, are a favorite at Matchbox.

only \$23. The char-grilled New York Strip Steak (\$24) — topped with red wine gorgonzola and onion straws with a roasted garlic clove — offers a rich taste explosion that will bring you back. A favorite is Matchbox's Honey Glazed Pecan-Crusted Chicken, a bone-in breast with sautéed spinach, mashed sweet potatoes and chicken gravy — the pecans make this simply unforgettable (\$17).

Fun, cool and wildly popular — you can't strike out at the Matchbox.