

YOUR GUIDE TO EVERYTHING LAS VEGAS

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Feast on This!

Rao's puts its stamp on a Christmas Eve tradition

Caesars Palace
11 a.m.-3 p.m. Wed.-
Sun., 5-10:30 p.m.
daily. 702.731.7267

When Nicole Grimes was a kid in Pittsburgh, her grandmother used to make baccalà in a Crock-Pot that sat on top of the washing machine, so the kids wouldn't trip on the cord. Now the chef de cuisine of **Rao's** at Caesars Palace finds herself making that same salted cod dish for the **Feast of the Seven Fishes**.

The Italian celebration dinner on Christmas Eve truly is a gut buster, an over-the-top feast with seven seafood or fish dishes. The decadent tradition started as a fast from meat and milk to commemorate the birth of Jesus. Rao's takes the feast to a whole new level.

Guests can dine on one of Grimes' favorite dishes, cioppino, a fish stew made with scallops, clams, mussels, shrimp and cod in a lightly spiced tomato broth with grilled ciabatta bread. New to the Feast of the Seven Fishes menu this year is the lobster fra diavolo made with tagliolini pasta and lobster medallions in a spicy marinara sauce. Grimes

added some cherry peppers to the dish for an extra kick. A pan-seared sea bass, another of Grimes' favorites because it's lighter, comes with a couscous medley, wilted spinach, zucchini and cherry tomatoes in a white-wine butter sauce.

Of course, no feast can be complete without dessert, and Rao's serves up two for the feast: a chocolate pistachio yule log, basically a moist chocolate caked rolled with a pistachio gelato, and a chocolate-covered, cherry-infused crème brûlée with a hidden treasure of chocolate-covered cherries. If the specials don't entice, Rao's already has 10 seafood items on the menu to order a la carte.

Grimes, who came to Rao's when it first opened in 2006, says the restaurant feels like Christmas all the time. "It's Christmas every day at Rao's," she says, referring to the Christmas trees that stand decked out in ornaments and lights year-round. "One time I asked, 'Did you guys forget to take down the decorations?'" —Susan Stapleton