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Tastes of Italy

Exceptional service and timeless Italian cuisine keep customers coming back to Bacco Italian Restaurant and Bacco Bistro, both of which are run by the Cipullo family

by BOB CRAIG and SHARON A. SHAW | photography by ROB HALL

For 20 years, the Cipullo family has been bringing people together to celebrate. Founders Frank and Judy Cipullo owned two renowned Bucks County restaurants—the Washington Crossing Inn and La Stalla in Newtown—but today the family's province includes Bacco Italian Restaurant, at the intersection of Routes 202 and 63 in North Wales, and Bacco Bistro, a beloved BYOB in the Doylestown Shopping Center.

Bacco is the Cipullo family's Neapolitan interpretation of an experience that calls for good food, family and friends. Frank crafted each menu from family recipes dating back to his great grandmother. Hospitality clearly runs in the family, led by the next generation of Cipullos—namely, Frank and Judy's daughters, Christine and Jacqueline.

Both restaurants are wildly popular and locally renowned, and each space brings something unique and timeless that can't be found anywhere else. Both menus share similar items, including coal-fired crispy crust pizzas, which are cooked in wood-burning ovens to produce a pizza unlike any in the area. (Bacco's unique pizza earned the restaurants "Best

of the Best" awards from *Suburban Life*, from 2010 to 2014.) Customers can select toppings from a menu of imported and fresh ingredients or choose one of the specialty pizzas offered.

At Bacco Bistro, one of the most popular pizzas is the "Brooklyn Style," according to Christine, featuring plum tomatoes, fresh basil and fresh mozzarella cooked in an iron pan. Other pizza favorites include the "Drunken Brooklyn," Margherita and Buffalo chicken, the last of which is made in the style of the restaurant's unique Fired-Up Wings, which, incidentally, are also cooked in the coal-fired oven. For customers who enjoy spicy foods, Christine also points out that Bacco's Famous Stuffed "Long Hots"—peppers filled with meats, cheeses and risotto—are finished in the oven. In addition to these great appetizers and pizzas, the restaurant also offers a selection of fresh salads, sandwiches, entrées and other favorites, such as old-fashioned "Pasta Fazool" soup.

"Our sauces and soups are made fresh every day," Christine says. "We have a Neapolitan style



←The Famous Stuffed "Long Hots" are among the most popular menu items at both Bacco locations.



of cooking—the freshest ingredients prepared the simplest way—inspired by Naples, Italy, where our family is from. Each dish is made to order. Customers love our plum tomato sauce, as well as the hot and sweet dipping sauce served with our fried calamari." Those sauces are all handcrafted in the restaurant using Frank's

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own recipes, and the home-made pastas are produced daily. While customers appreciate the effort required to make such items in house, it is another housemade specialty—the tiramisu—that earns the consistently highest accolades.

The Cipullo family knows that it takes specialized ingredients, creative recipes and careful preparation to keep customers coming back. Such attention to detail is evident in the quality of each dish, though Christine says the restaurants are happy to veer from the menu in order to accommodate special requests.

Many regular customers of Bacco Bistro enjoy the daily specials and have gotten to know Christine and the service staff by name. These regulars appreciate the personalized attention they receive and come to the bistro each week for reoccurring favorites. Bacco Bistro's entire menu is available for takeout during lunch or dinner. Also, patrons of both restaurants can take advantage of a corporate delivery service for party trays and other signature items.

One difference between the two Bacco locations is seating capacity. Bacco Italian Restaurant seats up to 300 guests, while Bacco Bistro can accommodate 80. Also, whereas Bacco Bistro is a more casual and relaxed BYOB, Bacco Italian Restaurant boasts a complete bar menu and wine list at its inside bar, as well as at an outdoor bar where guests can also enjoy alfresco dining in times of warmer weather.

"Bacco Italian Restaurant has a rustic feel," Christine says. "It's like a Tuscan farmhouse with wooden beams, stone walls and iron gates. Both locations have open kitchens where guests can view the production process. It's fun to watch the chefs prepare your food."

Also, Bacco Italian Restaurant boasts many features that set it apart from all other local dining spots. One of them is La Cucina, which translates to "the kitchen." This so-called kitchen

theater is an eight-seat bar-like area inside the restaurant that surrounds the wood-burning oven, allowing guests to have a front seat to the action. The Cipullo family prompts guests to make reservations early if seeking a seat in La Cucina, as spots tend to fill up quickly.

Also, inside the walls of Bacco Italian Restaurant is the exclusive wine room. The wine room seats 14 guests for an intimate dining experience ideal for small parties, gatherings and celebrations. In addition, Bacco Italian Restaurant accommodates all special occasions—rehearsal dinners, bridal showers, graduation parties, etc.—with room for as many as 275 people. Guests can also rent the entire restaurant out for a party or wedding, to include the outdoor garden and patio.

Bacco Italian Restaurant's Bacco Bocce Bar and Gazebo provides a unique experience for when the weather turns. Here, guests can enjoy alfresco dining and mingling, complete with multiple tables and umbrellas, as well as the live music at the outside bar throughout the weekend. A full bocce court by the gazebo welcomes patrons to play bocce, an Italian sport similar to lawn bowling.

Of course, both restaurants share a dedication to phenomenal service. Backed by a seasoned teams of servers, bartenders and chefs, Bacco Bistro and Bacco Italian Restaurant do their best to make guests feel at home. In fact, the Cipullos' mission is based solely on making their guests feel as if they are part of the family. As Christine tells her staff, "Don't just treat a customer like you would treat a guest in your home—do what your mother would!"

"We have a great staff that has been loyal throughout the years," she adds. "In addition to the food, our staff is what our guests come back for."

Christine invites all customers—new ones, regulars and everyone in between—to bring their family and friends to join the Cipullos around the table at Bacco Bistro and Bacco Italian Restaurant. At both locations, she promises, customers will enjoy favorite classic Italian recipes, a good glass of wine and an experience they sure won't forget. ■

→ **Bacco Bistro BYOB**
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