

CHESTERFIELD FOOD SCENE

Gianfabio's Italian Café: A Taste of The Hill in Chesterfield's Hilltown Village

BY CAROL ENRIGHT

Tucked in the corner of Hilltown Village shopping plaza in Chesterfield is a neighborhood restaurant that has been beloved by locals for almost 40 years: Gianfabio's Italian Café.

Operating at its current location since 1987, the restaurant is co-owned by brothers Matteo and Gianni Terzo and their parents. The name Gianfabio's — which Matteo came up with during a family dinner — is a mash up of Gianni's first and middle names: Gianni and Fabio.

To say the restaurant is a family business is an understatement.

Matteo and Gianni's father, Rosario, who grew up in Palermo, the capital city of Sicily, started working in the restaurant business when he was about 15 or 16 years old.

"He came to United States in 1968 and opened his first restaurant in '73," says Matteo.

That restaurant operated in Creve Coeur for 14 years.

"We moved to Chesterfield in '83 and had the opportunity to open up a restaurant closer to home in 1987," says Matteo.

Today, Gianfabio's is a local favorite frequented by regulars, many of whom have been dining at the restaurant for years.

"I would say 85 to 90 percent of our business are regulars that come in once or twice a week," Matteo says. Some have been coming in for so long that Gianfabio's is now serving the second generation.

"Some of these kids were in pumpkin seats when their parents started coming in, and now I'm serving them cocktails," Matteo says.

Whether eating in the more casual café/bar side of the restaurant or in the dining room with white tablecloths and a quieter atmosphere, Matteo says diners can count on "consistently good food and friendly service."

He describes the restaurant as "a taste of The Hill in Hilltown Village."

"Instead of driving all the way to The Hill, you can stay closer to home and get the same quality food."

Speaking of the food, it's all made in house. Most of the recipes come from the family patriarch, Rosario, but Gianni, the chef, is always working on new specials to add to the menu.

"And mom makes homemade cream limoncello which is a little bit different than the standard limoncello — people are loving that right now," says Matteo.

While the restaurant is known for its veal dishes, rotating fresh seafood specials and pasta, Matteo has a few favorites: "Our shrimp oreganati is dynamite. And we have a great filet mignon with a cognac peppercorn sauce which is incredible."

And don't sleep on the desserts which are all house made.

As Matteo has watched new restaurants come and go, he is grateful for the loyal following of customers who have supported Gianfabio's through the years.

"Sometimes people look past us with all the new stuff," he says. "Give the local restaurants — whether it's us or another local restaurant — the opportunity to give you great food and great service."

Gianfabio's Italian Café

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