



The best always starts fresh Local couple opens pizza franchise in Youngsville

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Under the water tower in Youngsville is a new experience in Acadiana pizza. And boy are we lucky.

Ianni Guglielmo began serving northern Italian cuisine from his homeland on the Gulf Coast of Florida several years ago, expanding as demand increased. His pies have been voted "Best Pizza on the Emerald Coast" in 2006 and 2007, not to mention receiving accolades for his Italian pasta, sandwiches and salads.

Marcus, 48, and Jill Guidry, 47, of Lafayette frequented Guglielmo's place when vacationing in Destin, Fla., often buying pizzas on the route back to carry home. When the couple started researching restaurant franchises to open in Acadiana, not to mention noticing the lack of dining options in Youngsville, Ciao Bella Pizza da Guglielmo was a natural.

"This is pizza that I know and love," Marcus Guidry said. "It was a natural for us."

Ciao Bella opened last October at the new strip shopping mall on Iberia Street in Youngsville, beneath the town's water tower. David and Sandra Legé, with 15 to 20 years experience in Acadiana dining, manage the restaurant.

The recipes are all Guglielmo, Guidry said, but the couple made a few changes to fit local palates, such as adding a muffaletta sandwich, a pizza with jalapeño peppers, a supreme pizza option and one of "Acadiana's best hamburgers," Jill Guidry offered.

But what you'll find at Ciao Bella overall is fresh ingredients, sauces and dough made daily, homemade potato chips that are crispy and non-greasy and spicy Italian sausage from Chicago the owners swear you can't find anywhere else in Louisiana.

The sauces are to die for, from a spicy cacciatore to a heavenly marinara that makes ordinary spaghetti and meatballs or sausage extraordinary. The house oil used for dipping the homemade bread is equally wonderful, and is used to drizzle on the restaurant's outstanding panini sandwiches for just the right added flavor.

Definitely come for all those items, particularly the veggie panini with its grilled portabella mushroom cap, perfectly roasted red peppers, sweet red onions, spinach leaves, fresh mozzarella and basil on a ciabatta bun. Best vegetarian sandwich -- or panini for that matter -- I have ever tasted. The pasta dishes taste authentic and come laced with shredded Parmesan off the block and all fresh ingredients.

But the pizza -- Moma Mia! There are 16 gourmet pizzas to choose from, including three served with different creamy white sauces. Diners can also add traditional and gourmet toppings and children can order a 7-inch cheese or pepperoni "pizzete."

The Ortolana features fresh spinach, artichokes, black olives, feta cheese, sliced tomatoes, shredded mozzarella and sauce.

For a white sauce pizza, try the Bianca with its ricotta cheese, panna cream, sliced tomatoes, fresh spinach, mushrooms, onions and shredded mozzarella or the Pizza Rustica with long grilled chicken slices, panna cream, gorgonzola cheese, sliced tomatoes, arugula and shredded mozzarella.

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The restaurant is perfect for a post-game pizza stop for neighboring baseball teams and the like. The Italian wall mural and photos of Italy by Jake and Jill Millet, with assistance from Jake's sister Addie Millet, also create a romantic atmosphere. There's a room off the side that can be used either for the rowdy baseball teams or a quiet birthday party or shower. Outside tables give us one more place in Acadiana to enjoy the great weather.

Ciao Bella offers daily specials during the week (dine-in only), plus redemptive coupons for schools. They don't deliver, but take-out is available, as is catering to area businesses.

Don't wait until you travel through Youngsville to try Ciao Bella. Trek out there this week -- or tonight -- with the kids. You won't be disappointed.6

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