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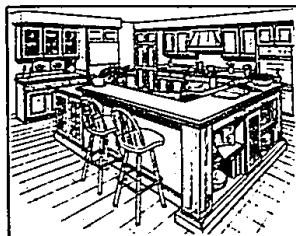
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Birmingham, Troy, West, Ft., Ga., S.E. Thru. 9-8
Other Showings by Appointment

Pasta from page 1B

Center Markets, Birmingham Community and Merchant of Vito markets in Birmingham; Market Basket in Franklin; Vito's Fruit Market in Beverly Hills; and Papa Joe's in Rochester.

The business began in the couple's Birmingham home in 1991, a year after they married in the Sansonetti's native village of Asunta, Italy.

"It took off, and we realized we had a good product," said Joe Sansonetti, a (1970) Seasholm High School, and Michigan State University graduate who once ran Pacifico's restaurants in Troy and downtown Detroit.

The couple handles all the details, down to label designs and renovation of the 2,000-square-foot building they lease. Kathy Sansonetti uses her experience as a wholesale wine marketer to sell pasta.

They use high-quality ingredients — olive oil, chicken breast and lean beef. They even hand-fill the bags containing sauce.

"We can't compete on price... so we say you can't match the quality. Nobody can beat us on

quality," Joe Sansonetti said. Handmade pasta, he said, "is less dense, it's plumper and fuller. You can actually get more filling into it."

Joe Sansonetti comes by his pasta-making prowess from his parents and grandparents. He said he grew up kneading spaghetti dough and carried home-made delicacies to school in his lunch box.

"You wake up in the morning and (grandmother) is in the kitchen with the pots and the pans, and she's making you polenta (a cornmeal mush) for breakfast."

He said he still queries his grandmother about recipes but makes his sauces spicier than hers, to satisfy American tastes.

His grandfather, Pacifico Sansonetti, made his own sausage, cheese, wine. "He'd sit down and eat a jar of pickled pigs feet and drink a gallon of wine and go out in the garden with his tomatoes," Joe Sansonetti said.

A picture of Pacifico Sansonetti is on the office wall.

Sansonetti's "Neon Palm" Jamaican "Jerk Style" sauce, a

fairly fiery mixture of orange, curry, peppers and ginger got the approval of Marty Rafal, who runs Rafal Spice on Russell Street in Detroit's Eastern Market.

"It's one food product he had nothing bad to say about," said Marty's son, Donald Rafal. "Usually it's too vinegary or too salty or too this or too that."

"Neon Palm" sells moderately well at Rafal Spice, he added.

The Sansonetti don't want to sacrifice quality by getting too big, but Joe's hands are working to the limit. They currently sell to about 18 restaurants. In addition, five Birmingham-area Kroger stores are selling Sansonetti's chicken ravioli salad and lasagnas in the "Premier" dells.

They plan to add several more pasta makers this year to keep up with demand. But, Joe Sansonetti said, there's not much room for improvement in the recipe, which remains remarkably vital despite its age.

"It's like the oldest recipe known to man. It's 4,000 years old."

Mucci from page 1B

an eye on everything," Frank Mucci said.

In addition, the Muccis have relatives in Italy that they sometimes dispatch to check out companies whose products Mama Mucci is interested in importing. The family hails from the Molise region in east central Italy.

Currently, about six percent of the company's business is retail; the rest is wholesale business with restaurants like Ernesto's in Plymouth; Unique Restaurant Corporation's Morrell's in Southfield; and Ann Arbor's Main Street Ventures restaurants, like Grati.

"This year we hope to bring (retail) up to 20 to 25 percent," Frank Mucci said.

Vincent Mucci said that while Mama Mucci's products can cost twice as much as industry giants Mueller's or Prince's. But, he added that better ingredients —

Semolina wheat, eggs and water — and better production techniques make Mama Mucci's better quality than the big producers. "The look, the color, the taste, the texture — it's totally like night and day," Vincent Mucci said.

He added that while egg improves pasta flavor, it doesn't increase cholesterol. The big producers don't use eggs, he said.

In addition, Mama Mucci uses a sheeting and rolling process for its pasta, which is superior to the extrusion method used by big producers, Vincent Mucci said.

Rick Desmet, head chef at Ernesto's in Plymouth, said his kitchen uses Mama Mucci's fettuccine, linguine and angel hair pasta, among others.

"The produce a product just like we used to make on our own," Desmet said, adding that the kitchen has become too busy to make its own pasta now.

Mama Mucci came out with three different cuts of fresh pasta Jan. 1. These include a rainbow pack of spinach, tomato and egg noodles. The new dry pastas included special red fettuccine; papardelle, an extra wide noodle; bow tie noodles; linguine and angel hair.

In addition, the company recently got U.S. agriculture department approval to produce stuffed pastas. Mucci said the company is planning to offer some kind of meat ravioli, "maybe smoked pheasant."

Mama Mucci's products are available at Roadside Market in Plymouth; Vic's markets in Novi and Southfield; Busch's grocery stores in Ann Arbor; Merchant of Vito in Dearborn and Birmingham; Shopping Center Markets in Northville, Commerce Township and Oak Park; and Western Markets in Berkeley and Dearborn.

3 generations find success

BY BRIAN LYBRIGHT
STAFF WRITER

Three generations of family are helping stoke the success of Houlahan's Culinary Traditions, a pasta maker in Auburn Hills.

Company namesake, Elena Houlahan of Bloomfield Hills has several daughters, a son and a daughter-in-law working in the Auburn Hills-based business. Granddaughter Peyton Moese, age two months, and grandson Joseph Collins can often be found at the office, near their parents.

The company, meanwhile, is shipping its 46 varieties of Elena's pasta products across the country.

"We have everything from little mom and pop stores that might order three cases at a time to large stores that order 130 cases," said Caroline (Collins) Moese, 26, Elena's daughter, and a company vice president. Her sister, Jill Collins, 26; brother John Collins, 24; and sister-in-law Chyn Collins, 23, all are involved in the business. Another sister, Kathie Collins, 35, is a computer expert who works elsewhere but occasionally helps with Elena's computers. A

Elena's products can be found at Jacobson's and Merchant of Vito stores; Long Lake Market in Bloomfield Hills; Quorton Market in Birmingham; Pappa Joe's in Rochester; and Market Square in Birmingham.

fourth sister, Tricia, 31, handles the company's mail-order operations from Pittsburgh.

The retail outlets include Macy's and Bloomingdale's. Closer to home Elena's products can be found at Jacobson's and Merchant of Vito stores; Long Lake Market in Bloomfield Hills; Quorton Market in Birmingham; Pappa Joe's in Rochester; and Market Square in Birmingham.

They sell angel hair, fedelline (a thin flat pasta), linguini, fettuccine (a wide noodle similar to fettuccine) and papardelle (a ribbon-like pasta).

They come in a variety of fla-

vors, including clam, egg, garlic and parsley, lemon pepper and tomato and basil.

Among the more exotic flavors are morel mushroom fettuccine, squid ink fettuccine or linguini, and green olive and pimento fedelline.

"The colors are so vibrant in all the pastas and when you cook them the colors stay that way," said Moese.

Nearly two years ago, Elena's came out with pasta platino — a complete dinner in a bag. It includes complete pasta and spice packs for sauce and salad that can be mixed with a few ingredients at home to make sauce and dressing. For example, a spice pack might be combined with sautéed onion and can of tomatoes for a red sauce; or cream, butter and Parmesan cheese added to spices for a white sauce.

Elena's pasta sauces offer plenty of variety as well. Sauces with an olive oil base include: basil and red hot pepper, garlic and basil, garlic and dill, and garlic and oregano.

The tomato-based sauces include: tomatoes with sweet peas, marinara and tomatoes with tolas garlic.

COOKING CALENDAR

Send items to be considered for publication to: Keely Wygonik, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 35251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150, or by fax (313) 591-7279.

Cooking

QUICK AND HEALTY MEALS
Cooking demonstration, "A Vegetarian Food Primer," 7-9 p.m. Tues., March 28, Rochester High School. Join executive chef, Matthew Hall, and registered dietitian, a Fe Fromme, and registered dietitian, a Fe Fromme. Fee \$10 per person, includes food samples. (313) 652-5530

RECIPE

RECIPE
Cooking demonstration, "A Vegetarian Food Primer," 7-9 p.m. Tues., March 28, Health Development Network at Bostons, 30750 Grand River. Fee is a \$5 fee. Sample delicious vegetarian dishes. (313) 477-8404

RECIPE

RECIPE
Easy and Elegant Appetizers, 7:30-8:30 p.m. Tues., April 4, Longshore House, 34700 Kensington Road. Fee is \$10 per person. (313) 477-8404

FOOD LABELS
Cooking demo, "Understanding the new FDA food labels," 12:00-1:00 p.m. Wed., March 29, U-14, Liberal Arts Building, Henry Ford Community College, 5101 E. Green, Dearborn. (313) 845-9629

KITCHEN

KITCHEN
Sandy Giesse demonstrates baked pasta dishes, 7-9 p.m. Tues., March 28, Nové, Wed., March 29, Redford; Thurs., March 30, W. Bloomfield and Frk, March 31, Rochester. There is a \$2 fee. Chef series features Brian Polym of Acadia, 12:30 Sat., April 1, West Bloomfield. Fee is \$40. (313) 537-1900

RECIPE

RECIPE
Flavors of New Orleans, Chef Louis P. P. "Louis" at the River, 6-8 p.m. Mon., March 27, 4230 N. Woodward. Fee is \$10. (313) 640-7111

RECIPE

RECIPE
Introduction to Aquaponics, 7:30-9:30 p.m., March 27 at the Good Food Company, 34700 Kensington Road. Fee is \$10. (313) 841-8100

LEMON'S NATURAL CUISINE
Cooking demo, natural cuisine, step-by-step instruction, recipe handouts, 2:00-3:00 p.m. Wed., March 29, 22550 Inland, Road, Farmington Hills. (810) 478-4455

SOUTHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Jeff Meles of the Golden Museum is offering a series of classes 6:30-8:30 p.m. on Tuesdays at the Community Ed Center, 18575 W. Nine Mile, Southfield. Cost \$40 per session, \$150 for series of 5. Upcoming classes include: Exciting Seafood, May 2. (313) 746-5700

RECIPE

RECIPE
Discussion of herbs with herbologist, Barb Berg, 7-9 p.m. Fri., March 31, Grove Gallery & Boutique, 105 S. Main St., Royal Oak. Cost \$5. Barb will be offering short and personal interview sessions, Sat., April 1 at the gallery. Cost \$20. Includes tea. Herbs will be discussed to best meet your needs. (313) 308-6162

FOODS YOUR WHOLE SELF

Let Tania and her husband's whole foods, vegetarian cooking classes are being offered, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Thursdays from March to June at the Daily Grind in Ann Arbor. This week, Bean Outlets. (313) 968-0761