

DINING

Upscale Compari's is a neighborhood favorite

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If you judge an Italian restaurant's success by the amount of basil they use, then Compari's is doing just fine. This small, upscale Italian restaurant in downtown Plymouth goes through 12 pounds a week.

Fresh basil goes into house favorites like the Capellini Amore, a delightful toss of angel hair pasta, olive oil, artichokes, diced tomatoes and pine nuts. And it goes into Compari's trade secret spaghetti sauce.

We all know it's the sauce that defines an authentic Italian kitchen.

"I'd say the sauce is the heart of it because that's what goes into the lasagna and all the pasta dishes," said owner Frank Yaquinto, who also owns Paisano's in Dearborn. "All my life my mom cooked at home. Absolutely, I use her recipes. It's all in the sauce."

Located on busy Main Street, Compari's opening was much anticipated by both the residential and business community. Since they opened their doors last summer, they've been busy for lunch and dinner.

"This place is rocking," said Yaquinto. "Plymouth is definitely an upcoming place. We have the best spot in town."

Menu
Sure, location helps, but it's a

Compari's
Where: 350 S. Main, Plymouth, (734) 416-0100
Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday-Wednesday; 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Thursday; 11 a.m. to midnight Friday; noon to midnight Saturday; 3-9 p.m. Sunday.
Atmosphere: Close and comfortable. Smoking restricted to bar area.
Menu: Definitely Italian. Enough choices for variety but not confusion.
Prices: Moderate
Reservations: For parties of eight or more.
Credit cards: Visa, Mastercard and American Express

restaurant's menu that keeps customers coming back. Compari's has a nice one. The appetizer selection is very appealing, offering anything from calamari, shrimp scampi, and mussels sautéed in a red wine marinara sauce, to a simple plate of marinated eggplant and roasted red peppers. The appetizers also are reasonably priced, from \$5.95 to \$6.95 on average.

As expected, there are several pasta choices, ranging from creamy Fettuccine Alfredo to Linguini Peccatore with lots of mussels, scallops and shrimp, to the very simple Pasta Fagioli, an Italian favorite of spaghetti with a thin tomato sauce, butter beans and black pepper.

Entrées include several veal dishes, ribs and sausage, beef, chicken and fish. The Veal Marsala is a top seller, along with the Capellini Amore.

Chef Tony Yaquinto, Frank's nephew, has a reputation for making delicious soups. "Our best soup is our chicken pastina.

We make it every day with fresh chicken and carrots," he said.

The cream of mushroom soup I ordered with my grilled eggplant sandwich for lunch one day did nothing to tarnish Yaquinto's reputation. It was chock full of porcini and portobello mushrooms and tasted as good or better than any cream of mushroom soup I've ever had. The porcini and portobello "suck up the juice nice," said Chef Yaquinto.

Pizzas
It's impossible to talk about Compari's menu without noting their specialty pizzas, like the one with fresh spinach, ranch dressing, tomatoes and mushrooms or the Calabrese, which comes with roasted red peppers, seasoned chicken and a light mozzarella. The excellent crust is due to the restaurant's brick oven, said Frank Yaquinto. "It's like a throwback to the 1960s. We also hand-toss the dough."

Compari's lunch menu accom-

modates appetites of every size. It focuses on soups, salads and sandwiches and offers several entrees, such as lasagna, Shrimp Scampi and Veal Parmesan. You can also "pick your pasta and pick your sauce" for \$7.95. On Fridays, try the salmon patties topped with seafood sauce and peas. (Not many restaurants serve old-fashioned salmon patties. For many of us, it's true comfort food.)

Occasionally, Compari's features live music. On Friday, March 2, and Saturday, March 3, they'll welcome back the Marty Montgomery jazz ensemble.

Plymouth resident Steve Richards is a very satisfied customer. "Compari's food is superb," he said in a recent e-mail. "The bathrooms are so clean, you could see your reflection in the tiles. I think people should know what we have in Plymouth."

Yaquinto attributes Compari's success to the hard work of his management and service team. They intend to keep customers like Steve Richards very happy.

"We enjoy it. It's like a labor of love," he said.



Compari's crew: (Left to right) General manager Ed Bielaska, manager Robin Lane, owner Frank Yaquinto, Maureen Yaquinto, and Chef Tony Yaquinto show off two popular menu items: Veal Marsala and Capellini Amore.

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