# Picano's pleases diners for over 18 years

When you go to a restaurant for the first time, it's nice to have background information. Sometimes you get that from a friend, who made the recommendation, but it's even better if it comes from the owner. In the case of Picanos in Troy, owner Dominic Picano offers it on the back of his menu.

He welcomes you formally and informs you that he's a native of Cassino, Italy (40 miles north of Naples), and that his first eatery was Greggs Pizzeria in Detroit. Then, on a snowy day in January 1983, he opened Picanos. He's been the inspiration there ever since.

He knows that he's done it right for more than 18 years, and he has no plans to change his comfortable, white-table-cloth eatery.

Picano noted that the formula for a successful restaurant is simple; hard work, owning only one location, where the owner can be on premise, top-quality food and superior service.

From the time I built my home in Troy in 1974, said Picano, a continuing froy resident, my goal was to build a six-down restaurant in the city. I hought the farm where the restaurant is now located and hired a good kitchen staff to make my authentic Italian recipes.

TEAMWORK

## TEAMWORK

Since Picano operates as his own maitre d', greeting guests at both lunch and dinner, he relies both limited and dinner, he relies on three key people in the kitchen. Chef Giuseppe Randazzo has made Picano's homemade pastas daily for the last eight years. His skills are best illustrated in gnoech rondina, house-made dumplings tossed with ground Italian sausage and a tomato basil sauce; and casalinga, house-made vermicelli, tossed with meat sauce, garaished with fresh mushrooms and a blend of cheese, then baked to perfection. Jay Lee is Picano's day chef and Glen Thromeberry, Dominic Picano's son-in-law, is



Picano's chefs (from left), Glen Throneberry of Warren, Jay Lee of Elmont and Giusepp Ranbazzo of Shelby Township add the final touches to a spagnetti dish

head toque at night. Titaly has so many regions, 'Chef Jay said. 'Each is like a different country, outting an individual stamp on variations of the same dish. This is what keeps cooking Italian interesting for me. I'm not ftalian, but I believe I was born with an Italian heart.' Pleano dubs Italian food 'simple and flavorful. All you really need is homemade pasta, fresh garlie, good olive oil, fresh parsley, said and pepper, quality tomatoes, good cheeses and proseciute. From these your can make wonderful dishes."

## FAVORITES

Since 80 percent of Picano's diners are regulars, it's easy to spot their favorite dishes. At hinch both mostaccioli and spaghetti with meat sauce are

most frequently ordered. Two
entrees top all others, Pollo carciofi, chicken breast sautéed
with baby artichoke hearts and
mushrooms in a white wine,
lemon, garlie and fresh thyme
sauce, and scaloppine di vitello
alla Picano, veal medallions,
served in a light wine sauce
with prosciutto, mushrooms
and artichoke hearts, garaished
with melted cheese.
At dilmer, hot appetizers

with include cheese.
At dimer, lot appetizers such as calamari fritti and carciofi to sea, artichole dipped in an egg and cheese batter, then sauteed golden brown, are crowd-pleasers.
The Pasta Lovers section of the menu lets you call the preparation of nine different pastas, with nine unique sauces and eight diverse garnishes.
If you want to try all the variations, you'll need to go to

Picano's 648 times. Add on the house specialties, regular main dishes, nightly specials and you're up to 700 visit she'ore you begin to repeat a Picanos experience!

Seafood lovers, in particular, should check the daily specials. Although pickerel Sicilliano is the "always on the menuf aworite, flounder stuffed with an assortment of other seafood and shiitake mushrooms is a hands-down favorite among seafood specials.

"If someone has had a dish here," Picano continued, "and it's not on the menu the day they come in or if they can describe a dish they've had elsewhere and would like to try our interpretation, that person should talk to the server. If we have the ingredients in the kitchen, we'll make it for them.

## ENHANCEMENTS

Wine is a big part of an Italian meal experience. Thirty Italian red wines make up the core of Picanois list, which is complemented by a few Italian white sand California's Napa Valley, Picano said, we sell a lot of Andretti and Robert Mondavi wines.

So what does the owner like to eat and drink? "My facorities and robe to eat and wink?" My facorities Amarone (Sid) with our New York Steak and for pasta, simple tossed with olive oil and garle, it's Chianti Rufflino Ducale Gold (S62).

Sweet endings to an Italian meal are the dolce, Although



## PICANO'S

Where: 3775 Rochester Road, Troy (248) 689-8050.

Open: Lunch II a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Saturday; Dinner 4-10:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday. until 11 p.m. Friday-Saturday, noon to 9:30 p.m. Sunday

Food style: Italian traditions including homemade pastas. seafood and yeal specialties.

Cost: Served with a choice of soup or salad and a bread basket, per-person lunches average \$11, dinner \$19.

Reservations: Accepted.

Extra: Smoking in bar/lounge only.

other options are tray present-ed, cannoli and tiramisa are the house-made treats. Buon appetito!

Eleanor Heald is a Troy resident who writes about dining, food, wine and spirits for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. To leave her a voice mail message, dial (134) 953-2047 on a message, dial (1341 your on or touch tone phone, mailbox 1864#.

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