

# Pizza fans boost favorite places

(Continued from page 3A)

belongs to Romano's, judging from his letter to the Observer.

"I nominate Romano's Pizzeria as the best pizzeria in the Farmington area, let alone the entire metropolitan Detroit area."

"UNTIL I SAMPLED the pizza from Romano's, I always had to order double cheese on my pizza (it seems that Romano's offers that much cheese without asking for it.)"

"Another reason for liking this pizza is the extremely friendly conditions present at the store whenever I've gone there to pick up my order. Joe and Pat Mannino are warm and courteous to me every time. The thick and chewy crust is reminiscent of the pizza my own mother makes," he wrote.

After six years in the pizza business, the Mannino family continues to try to live up to the high praise of their fans.

Overseeing their brood of six children, Joe and Pat Mannino divide their time and offspring between their two pizzerias. In addition to the Nine Mile and Grand River location, the family operates a pizzeria on Fourteen Mile and Middlebelt in Farmington Hills.

Mrs. Mannino takes care of the Grand River location, personally

greeting customers and keeping an eye on the kitchen activity.

Her husband operates the family's Farmington Hills store.

"We have his and her pizzerias," Mrs. Mannino explained.

WHEN THE FAMILY started in the pizzeria business, it was Mrs. Mannino who did all the cooking. She learned from the employees of the previous owner to make pizza.

Later, when they found staff to make the same quality pizza they could, Mrs. Mannino gave up cooking in favor of greeting customers and keeping the books.

Now, when the family attends Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church in Farmington, she calls each usher by their favorite pizza.

"Hi, large cheese, Hi, pepperoni and mushroom," she admits saying to the customers.

She knows each of her regular customers and their usual orders. When someone deviates, she asks for an explanation. Usually the reason is that the customers have guests.

Voters wrote of visitors beginning and ending each stay in Farmington with a pilgrimage to Romano's.

"When my brother-in-law comes here from out of town he stops at

Romano's first and last," wrote Mrs. Conrad Dompiere, of Farmington.

"It's good enough to serve guests with pride. Mom is not really a pizza lover but she enjoys Romano's whenever she visits. The service is excellent," wrote Athena Andrews of Farmington Hills when she nominated the Fourteen Mile location.

MANNINO CREDITS "hard work and conscientious persons interested in the product working together" as his family's success formula.

While their customers enjoy pizza with pepperoni and mushrooms or with everything on it, the family likes to eat cheese pizza with sauce.

"We like to taste the sauce and the dough," Mrs. Mannino said.

Their sauce is a family secret.

For the entire family, business is placed before pleasure.

"Our kids give up Pine Knob and movies to be here. Our first duty is to our business," said Mrs. Mannino.

Their children, Sam, 22, Peter, 21, Joe, 13, Tina, 20, Toni, 18 and Tom, 16, help out with the chores. So does Lena Russo, Mrs. Mannino's older sister, who cooks for the Grand River pizzeria.

The next generation already is gear-

ing up to take over the restaurant business. Toni and Joe are planning to go into business together.

"I enjoy it a lot. I love cooking. I enjoy working with the public," said Toni.

SHE AND HER brother are conducting a friendly feud over which one makes the better pizza.

Toni learned to cook when an employee left one summer without giving notice. She stepped in to fill the gap.

In turn, she taught Joe to make pizza.

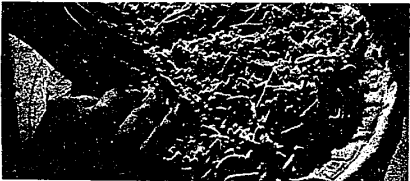
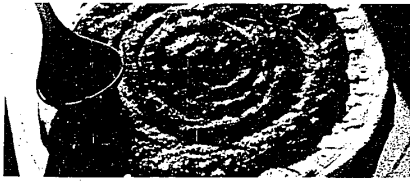
One time their rivalry was forgotten when she sent their names into a radio station's pizza flipping contest. Joe was chosen to participate. The night before he made a Romano's T-shirt for the contest. He almost won the three speed bike which was the first prize when a Dino's distributor in the audience recognized him as a professional pizza maker.

His Romano's shirt was covered by a Dino's T-shirt during the contest because the other pizza maker was sponsoring the flip.

"I almost had a three-speed," he still mourns over his disqualification for being a professional.



Toni Mannino of Romano's Pizzeria slices an award-winning pizza. How many people does a large pizza serve? Depends on whether you're serving babies or lumberjacks. (Staff photos by Harry Maunhe)



From sauce through cheese to the final product, Farmington pizza voters insisted on fresh products in their pies.



In this day of Formica and ice milk, it's good to know that some things never change. The art of pizza flipping, practiced by Joe Mannino, is still alive.

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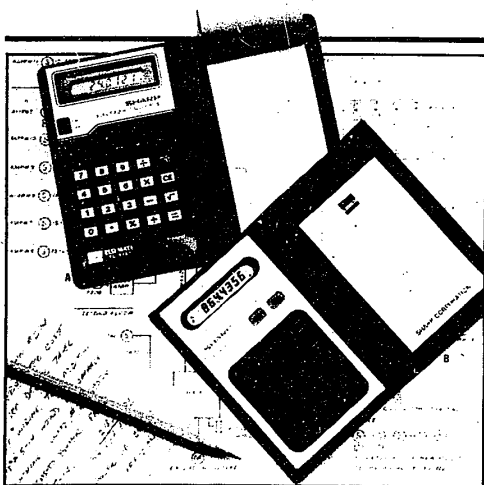
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