

# Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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## Popular pasta: Oodles of noodles offered at suburban restaurants

By Ethel Simmons  
staff writer

**S**PAGHETTI HAS BEEN around a long time — but "pasta," now there's something else.

"Some people have never even heard of pasta," declared Canton resident John Elstro, manager of Chuck Muer's very first Mama & Pao's restaurant in Wayne. The emphasis at this prototype restaurant, which gets away from Muer's seafood image, is "fresh food and drink, not Italian food."

But many customers were disappointed when they couldn't find the traditional Italian dish of lasagna and the American creation, pizza, on the menu. Daily specials now include non-layered lasagna, made up fresh for each individual order and served in a saute pan, as well as pizza.

"Within two weeks, lasagna was our No. 1 seller," Elstro said.

A sketch on the bottom of the menu, showing different Italian pastas, or noodles, also had some customers expecting to order their choice of any of these for various dishes.

Most are available in specific dishes. All Charley's eateries have "pasta machines" turning out linguini as at Mama & Pao's. Different molds can fashion the many sizes and shapes of pasta, including wide fettucini and even wider lasagna noodles.

Four choices of sauces are offered on the "Homemade Pasta" section of the luncheon menu. There's white clam sauce, red clam sauce (with tomato), primavera (with vegetables) and meat sauce. The dinner menu adds Provencale (tomato-wine), Mediterranean red sauce (zesty) and diablo (spicy). Customers also may request meatballs or Italian sausage.

"White clam linguine is our No. 1 best-seller companywide," said Elstro. The Muer seafood restaurants and family taverns feature some pasta dishes, forerunners of the Mama and Pao's concept.

White linguine, made with egg noodles, or green linguine, made with spinach noodles, are both offered at Mama & Pao's.

Lunch also features a cold pasta dish, Mama's Pasta Salad, combining chicken, ham, choices and vegetables with chilled homemade pasta.

THE DINNER menu has nightly pasta specials, which offer a wider range of selection for tasty entrees. Each

### table talk

night there's one of these: Antipasto Fettucini (salami, tuna and cheese), Fettucine Carbonara (with bacon and ham), Pasta Pesca (Boston scrod and whole wheat linguine), Chicken and Artichoke Pasta and Linguine Shrimp Cassino (including fresh spinach), plus a changing Sunday special.

For anyone who doesn't like — or want — pasta, the menu also has chicken, fish, beef and steaks.

Like any new restaurant concept, Mama & Pao's is adapting to its customers' tastes and needs. But it looks like another winner for the phenomenally successful entrepreneur Chuck Muer. The second Mama & Pao's is expected to open the second week of June at the corner of Schoolcraft and Merriman, Livonia.

IN ANOTHER part of the metropolitan area, a restaurant in the Maple House chain is the prototype for a trendy kind of place that includes new pasta dishes among its lighter meals.

Now called Cafe Pastella, the former Maple House at Maple and Coolidge in Troy has an art-deco decor by Alexis Labi and a menu offering hot and cold pasta prepared in the style of nouvelle cuisine.

The Maple House restaurants are owned by Bruce Cameron, who also operates several fine restaurants complemented by Labi's sophisticated interiors. One of these is Conetti's in West Bloomfield, where the pasta dishes featured at Cafe Pastella originated.

"We're all trying to catch a little bit

of the pasta wave, so to speak," said Chris Boars, manager of Cafe Pastella.

Other Maple House restaurants will probably change over to the new concept if it proves successful. Business has already picked up, Boars said.

THE MENU features four dishes under the heading Pastas, and these soon will be increased to eight, for a projected new menu. There's also a pasta salad of the day.

"Pasta can be bland. We are working with wines and using wine in almost all of them," Boars said. The tomato sauces are made with Italian plum tomatoes. "They're the best on the market. You get the better flavor."

Fettucine Alfredo combines pasta verde — Italian spinach noodles — with cream, garlic and parmesan. Chicken Primavera uses three colors of rotini and fresh vegetables. Vermicelli Putanesca, which pairs the round noodle with spicy tomato sauce, will become Baked Fettucine Putanesca Parmesan, with flat noodles, on the new menu.

Paglia e Fieno offers pasta with cream, fresh parmesan, bacon and peas. Customers haven't ordered this one much, but it's delicious and will stay on the menu.

Dishes that will be added include Pasta Carbonara, which pasta-conscious customers have been asking for, even though it's not on the menu. This one has a heavier cream sauce, eggs,

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ELIZABETH CARNEGIE

Pasta chef Mary Freeman prepares dishes at the Wicker Works' "Lois Pasta" night at the Northfield Hilton.



Accordianist John Iannucci entertains regular customers Don and Lorraine McLeod of Troy (foreground) and Archie and Lorraine Smith of Detroit at the Wicker Works.

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