

The Paramus Post

Bright Salads Perfect for Summer Dining

By Mel Fabrikant



Ridgewood's A Mano

A Mano's Fresh-Made From Scratch Neapolitan Fare; Promotion Offers Two for One Entrees

Well-recognized as a destination for authentic artisanal Neapolitan pizza, Ridgewood's A Mano also offers a treasure-trove of light, healthy salads perfect for the warmer months. Substantial enough to enjoy as a meal or as a fresh compliment to any of A Mano's tempting hand-crafted pizzas, panini or entrees, the well-priced salad selections come alive with

flavorful additions including shaved Parmigiano-Reggiano, tangy gorgonzola, creamy goat cheese, freshly grilled artichoke hearts and

stems, and roasted peppers, as well as caramelized walnuts, crunchy baby greens, poached pear, and sensuous balsamic glazes.

"We use only the freshest premium ingredients, whether imported from Naples or sourced from local produce purveyors, so each dish is a celebration of simply perfect, unfettered flavors and textures," said A Mano owner Fred Mortati. "We are currently offering a two-for-one entrée promotion Monday through Thursday until the end of June, which allows patrons to enjoy two entrees for the price of one (equal or lesser value items) when they order pizza, lasagna or eggplant parmesan entrees."

A Mano's enticing offerings include its Poached Pear Salad, with baby mixed greens, caramelized walnuts and a poached pear, finished with Barolo wine vinegar and topped with crumbled goat cheese (\$11.99). Also on the menu is the Tricolore Salad with field greens, gorgonzola, caramelized walnuts, endive, extra virgin olive oil, and balsamic vinegar (\$7.99).

Its signature A Mano Salad incorporates mesclun with cherry tomatoes, roasted peppers, artichoke, Parmigiano-Reggiano, extra virgin olive oil, and balsamic vinegar (\$7.99). The Toscana Salad includes an array of baby spring mixed greens, pears, caramelized walnuts, lemon, and extra virgin olive oil (\$7.99). Rounding out the options is the Fresca Salad with fresh baby arugula, shaved Parmigiano-Reggiano, cherry tomatoes, and a balsamic glaze (\$8.99).

A Mano's new "Salad Pizza" is ideal for patrons desiring light summer fare. It combines any of the A Mano appetizer salads in an entree size, served atop Parmigiano Reggiano-flavored focaccia. At a \$4.99 supplement to the regular salad price, this is a delicious way to enjoy a large portion of A Mano's salads married with intensely flavored focaccio, providing a hearty, yet not overbearing meal option on those warm days of summer.

With salads and more, A Mano offers variety on and off the menu

Despite the nearly 20 varieties of pizza, cooked to crispy perfection in A Mano's 1,000 degree wood-burning ovens, the array of calzones, panini, and pastas are not an afterthought in quality or presentation.

For example, diners can enjoy eggplant, vegetable or meat lasagna appetizers (\$8.99), made with fresh tomato sauce and creamy mozzarella, all hand-made, based on traditional Neapolitan recipes. The lasagna is comprised of thin pasta sheets made on-site using a type of Caputo brand flour, which is specially milled in Naples for the purpose of making pasta.

A Mano also utilizes another variety of Caputo flour specifically intended for pizza-making. Known by many as the best all natural flour for pizza and pasta, Caputo flour is used by artisan pizza makers and chefs alike, from Mario Batali to A Mano's own pizzaiolo (specially-trained pizza chefs).

"Our specials frequently incorporate our outstanding fresh-made mozzarella, created each day on-premises by our Neapolitan-trained mozzarella puller, schooled in the art of creating perfectly-textured and flavored cheese," added Mr. Mortati.

A Mano's special Stuffed Mozzarella (\$8.99) is offered two ways. The mozzarella is hand-pulled and rolled to a one-quarter-inch thickness. Diners can enjoy a medley of two-inch mozzarella pinwheels stuffed with house-made pesto (basil, olive oil and Parmigiano-Reggiano) and sun-dried tomatoes, clustered around arugula and grape tomatoes, dressed with a balsamic glaze. Jumbo Mozzarella pinwheels, roughly five inches in diameter and three to a plate, are stuffed with freshly-grilled zucchini, eggplant and peppers, and also served with arugula and grape tomatoes, dressed with a balsamic glaze.

Among the specials, which vary daily, is the Mezzaluna pizza, or "half moon," that starts as a full size, hand-stretched pie, which is half Margherita pizza (fresh mozzarella, fresh tomato sauce, Parmigiano-Reggiano, extra virgin olive oil, and basil) strewn with Calamata olives. The other half is a calzone, oozing with a julienne of salami folded into creamy ricotta, mozzarella, and olive oil.

Meatballs, which are also served as a special in a trio for \$6.99, are prepared in the traditional Neapolitan manner using beef, Parmigiano-Reggiano, and basil, oven-roasted and served in house-made tomato sauce.

Adding to A Mano's charm as an ideal warm weather haunt for lovers of authentic Neapolitan cuisine, is the enticing array of sensuously-smooth gelati that greets guests from a picture-perfect display just inside the door. Using equipment transplanted from Naples, its many flavors of gelato are yet another of A Mano's hand-made treats for the eye and the palate, evoking how true gelato should taste.

"We are bringing the celebrated foods of Naples, the culinary center of Italy, to our patrons through classic recipes, presentation and, of course, simply the best, freshest ingredients available," concluded Mr. Mortati. Guests may enjoy their meals at the sleek bar, in the expansive two-level dining room or al fresco, at small tables on the sidewalk outside the restaurant.

About A Mano

A Mano, meaning "by hand," is focused on presenting the ultimate combination of authentic ingredients, technique, and methods to create an unmatched Neapolitan experience.

A Mano is one of only three U.S. pizza restaurants to receive prestigious certifications from both the Verace Pizza Napoletana and Associazione Pizzaiuoli Napoletani, the recognized authorities of Naples, Italy on traditional Neapolitan Pizza.

The exacting standards are what stand A Mano apart from the rest, from the expertise of the pizzaiolo (the specially-trained pizza chef) to the use of ingredients imported from Naples (from all-natural Caputo flour to the San Marzano tomatoes, grown in the foothills of Mt Vesuvio). Add-in fresh mozzarella, made on-site, by hand along with outrageous homemade gelato and desserts, and the true concept of artisan foods are revealed.

Down to the tiles and equipment, from floor to ceiling the restaurant's makeup is imported from Italy. Its twin domed ovens with round chimneys, hand-built on-site by Neapolitan Artisans using stones and volcanic soil imported from Naples, are the centerpiece of the restaurant, stretching to the ceiling of the two-story dining room. The architecture of these wood-fired ovens allow them to reach temperatures of 1,000 degrees, creating beautifully blistering, bubbling pizza in less than two minutes.

A Mano has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality and authenticity of the craft of traditional Neapolitan foods, with results that speak mouthwatering volumes in every bite.

The restaurant is open Monday to Thursday from 11:30 a.m. until 10 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m., and Sunday, from 12 p.m. until 10 p.m.

A Mano is located at 24 Franklin Avenue (at the corner of Chestnut Street), Ridgewood, NJ 07450. For more information, please call 201-493-2000 or visit www.amanopizza.com.