

WEST MEETS EAST

CALIFORNIA-STYLE PIZZA AND GOURMET ITALIAN FARE ARE FEATURES AT FELLINI'S

Pity the poor pizza. For years, it was topped with some of the most unimaginative ingredients: pepperoni, sausage, anchovies and cheese. Sure, some pizzerias served up better pies than others, but for the most part, a pizza was a pizza.

That was the case in Hampton Roads until Michael Cavish topped a crust with some chicken and barbecue seasonings and introduced the area to California-style pizza at his Ghent eatery, Fellini's.

Fellini's is tops when it comes to flavor and service, but then again, what would you expect from a restaurant named after a famed Italian movie maker? Fredrico Fellini was known for films with extravagant visual fantasy.

Since 1988, Fellini's has been dishing out fresh, home-style food seasoned with garlic and spices and served in generous portions. The atmosphere is casual, warm, friendly and staffed by some of the most experienced professionals in Norfolk's Ghent.

The restaurant operated in two locations on 21st Street before moving to the present location on Colley Avenue, also in Ghent, in 1995.

The menu includes a wide variety of Italian-inspired offerings, but Fellini's is probably best known for its unique, delicious assortment of pizzas.

Uniqueness was also a hallmark of Michael Cavish. Family and friends remember Michael as outrageous, interesting, energetic, exceedingly popular and well known. He was a restaurateur with a talent for cooking and a flair for interior design. Tragically, he was murdered on Dec. 2, 1998.

Michael's family now runs the restaurant—his sister Donna McCullough and her husband Mike, as well as Michael's niece Elizabeth Kloc and her husband Brett.

Michael's sister remembers her first taste of the California-style pizza, a variety introduced a quarter-century ago in California that focuses on exotic toppings and distinctive combinations of flavors.



"Michael had been introduced to it while traveling in California," she says. "I thought, 'Chicken and barbecue sauce on pizza?' But it was great. And it was something you couldn't find in Norfolk. It was exciting and different. That was Michael."

He loved being in the kitchen, Donna says.

"Most recipes he developed himself, and they remain on our current menu."

One of his favorites was the B.B.Q. Chicken Pizza, topped with Fellini's own barbecue sauce, diced chicken, sliced red onion, smoked Gouda and mozzarella cheese. Another was the Thai Chicken Pizza, which includes diced breast of chicken marinated in a spicy peanut-ginger sauce, green onions, sautéed zucchini, julienne carrots and roasted peanuts.

The menu also includes 21 other pizza selections, such as Cajun (with Louisiana andouille sausage), Mexican, Fresh Tomato, Garlic Chicken, Goat Cheese, Greek, Shrimp Pesto, Portabella Mushroom and Vegetarian.

Customers with traditional tastes prefer classic pies like Sausage and Pepperoni

Cheese, White and New York-style. Chefs prepare these standards with the same care and attention given to their showier counterparts; top-notch ingredients and expert know-how in the kitchen make all the pies something special.

Fellini's also gets high praise for its salads.

"People routinely compliment our salads as 'irresistible,'" says Donna. One favorite is the Caesar, which features a bowl of fresh romaine lettuce lightly tossed with Fellini's own Caesar dressing and topped with herb-garlic croutons and Romano cheese. Marinated grilled chicken or fried oysters can also be added.

The Greek Salad is even more popular, showcasing a bowl of fresh mixed greens topped with sliced vegetables, sun-dried tomatoes, feta cheese and herb garlic croutons.

Everything prepared at Fellini's, from the pizza and salad to pastas and gourmet burgers, is made fresh daily.

Pasta entrees include Seafood Delecto, Puttanesca, Pasta Romano, Fettuccini Alfredo and Rigatoni. There is also Baked Eggplant, Vegetarian Lasagna and Manicotti and grilled selections like Filet Mignon, Ribeye, Steak Pizzola, chicken and tuna.

The menu lists a variety of gourmet burgers, such as Bleu Cheese, Greek, Pesto, Bacon, Turkey-Veggie, Turkey-Nut and Turkey with a cranberry glaze.

"We are consistent and careful with our preparation," Donna says. "We want to be known as the best Italian restaurant in Hampton Roads."

Pricing is also important. "Although we buy the very best ingredients, we offer prices friendly to families," adds Donna.

Michael wanted Fellini's to be "a place you hope to find when you're out of town."

That's a mission Donna takes to heart.

"We strive to make the Fellini's experience so enjoyable that on the way out, people begin contemplating their next visit," she says. "Fellini's attracts a diverse crowd. There might be a couple dressed up and coming from the opera or a family with children. People like the warmth and comfort they find here, and of course, they like the taste too."

FELLINI'S GOURMET PIZZA CAFE
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