

Atsa some fina pasta

Pasta Fina serves up Italian and more by Tom Szor

Pasta Fina

5931 Heatherdowns Blvd. • Toledo

419-866-0670

Monday-Friday 11 a.m.-9 p.m.

Saturday 4 p.m.- 9 p.m.

Long known for its fine dining establishments, Toledo can now boast of another good specialty restaurant, the aptly named Pasta Fina, meaning fine pasta. Since its opening in May, discriminating diners have been making their way to this Heatherdowns Road eatery located at Perrysburg-Holland Road across from Kazmaier's supermarket. What they are discovering is a cozy dining room, impeccable service and conscientiously prepared entrees. This is not an impersonal, middling spaghetti house. The main idea at Pasta Fina is to mix and match multifarious sauces and noodles to create your own pasta dish. With nine pasta types and 10 sauces there are, well, 90 "pastabilities." But there's more. Panini subs (\$5.50) also top the menu with many variations. They all begin with freshly baked rolls brushed with herb infused olive oils. One of them, the New Yorker, is then stuffed with salami, mortadella and capicola. Another, the portobello is grilled portobello mushrooms, roasted red bell peppers, with provolone and feta cheeses. There is a whole array of specialty pizzas, such as the Pesto or the Alfredo (small \$5.50, medium \$12.50, large \$14.50). You add home-style favorites like veal or chicken parmesan (\$7.50) and lasagna (\$6.50 meat or vegetarian) and you would think it's safe to conclude that this is an Italian restaurant. Even Italian wedding soup can be had at a fair price (\$4.95). The only thing missing is an accordion squeezing out a bouncy tarantella. However Chef Gil Evans would rather you called the restaurant's offerings multiethnic. For example, his assistant chef is from Thailand and one of the available sauces is a Thai peanut sauce that is piquant, to say the least. One pizza is called the French connection, another one taco. A new steak and rib menu with domestic influences made its debut on Monday. Whatever the label, these dishes deliver satisfaction to those with gourmet appetites or to those, like me, who just appreciate carefully cooked meals. My puttanesca (a famous old Italian red sauce with olives, capers and cayenne pepper) came topped with fresh oregano and grated parmesan. Neither the capers nor the cayenne were overpowering. My guest chose the spicy Thai sauce over farfalle (bow-tie pasta) and a tossed salad with crisp, green romaine lettuce. All pasta dishes are \$6.50.

Chef Gil comes out of the kitchen to greet his patrons personally, and will custom-prepare dishes upon request. His willingness to accommodate was not lost on one guest who wanted lots of fresh spinach on the penne she ordered. As she was leaving to go to her movie she whispered to me, "You should try the salmon B.L.T. It's like nowhere else in town." Thanks, I will. The obvious dedication Evans shows to his craft should not be a surprise. Pasta Fina is another culinary venture of his corporate company Jen-Gil Management Services, which has been providing business lunches in downtown Toledo and also catering special events. A native Toledoan, Chef Gil learned his cooking secrets by spending countless hours in the kitchens of restaurants in the Little Italy sections of New York and Chicago. He is also a knowledgeable guy with whom to "dish" about music. When not mixing sauces he spends time playing jazz upright bass. Maybe before this weekend's Edgar Meyer concert (a professional jazz bassist appearing with the Toledo Symphony Orchestra) I'll come again to Pasta Fina for either the grilled sausage over pasta ala vodka or a steak pizziola smothered with smoked provolone.

If you are looking for a quiet, comfortable place to enjoy gourmet quality cuisine at prices that don't gouge your wallet, Pasta Fina is the place.

Tom Szor is a TCP freelance writer.

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