

{ 365 dining: FraGeno's Pizzeria }



FraGeno's Pizzeria.

by Rich Belmont



You should know in the Dubuque neighborhood of pizzerias there is a new kid on the block. FraGeno's (pronounced Frah-Geen-Os) opened in K-Mart Plaza next to Jumper's on May 1, 2012.

FraGeno's is the result of a partnership between Frank Valenti of Freeport, IL and Gene Knapp here in Dubuque. Frank started his restaurant career over 40 years ago and has been running Sicilian restaurants in Wisconsin and Illinois ever since. He has developed secret family recipes for all the sauces prepared at FraGeno's. Gene began working in his family's diner when he was 12 years old. He also cooked at the Desoto House in Galena for several years.



Gene is running the Dubuque restaurant with his lovely wife, Tonya. Their children, Kristen and Jared, are young apprentices and Gene's mom, Wanda Boeck, is one of the servers.

As soon as you arrive at FraGeno's you will notice this place is not about fancy décor or romantic ambience. It is, in fact, about good Italian food. Then when you begin to read the menu you will realize it's also about good Italian food at very reasonable prices. Salads range from \$3.25 to \$6.00; Sandwiches are only \$4.50 to \$6.75 and whole Pizza prices start at only \$5.00.



The Antipasto Salad (above) is a very large bowl of fresh lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers loaded with ham, salami, mortadella, provolone and mozzarella cheese, radishes, green olives and pepperoni. A nice summer salad is available with baby spinach, strawberries, blueberries, grilled chicken, blue cheese and walnuts.

I have been to FraGeno's several times for lunch. I like the Italian Meatball Sandwich with spicy meatballs and melted mozzarella or provolone cheese. The Sausage Patty Sandwich is very tasty and a real treat. So is the Italian Sub (above) stuffed with ham, salami, mortadella, lettuce, tomatoes and Italian dressing. In case you are wondering, mortadella is a pork sausage similar to bologna with cubes of pork fat embedded throughout. Italians like it sliced thin and almost always include it in deli sandwiches.

In my opinion, though, the King of the Sandwiches is the Stromboli (right). No other restaurant in Dubuque is offering this monstrosity of a whole meal in the shape of a sub. A traditional Stromboli is pizza dough topped with typical pizza ingredients and then rolled into a log and baked. In this restaurant the dough is simply stuffed with sausage, pepperoni, mushrooms, onions, black olives and either mild or hot giardiniera and then baked. I enjoy this so much I am thinking of going back for another one tomorrow!

The Calzones are excellent. These are baked turnovers made from pizza dough and filled with tomatoes, mozzarella and whatever pizza toppings you like. The Rockin Calzone Special is stuffed with mozzarella plus your choice of three pizza ingredients for only \$6.50! There are also several pastas to choose from. Of course you can have



spaghetti or mostaccioli or meat or spinach lasagna. I recently had meat ravioli with an Italian sausage patty on the side (above). When Wanda brought me this dish I couldn't believe my eyes. There were a large number of raviolis in a special marinara sauce. But on top of the raviolis was this huge patty that had to be 8 inches long and at least a half inch thick. It was really good so naturally I had to eat the whole thing!



On another visit I told my dining partner, Bryce, about this dinner so he asked our friendly and efficient server, Amber Wentz, to bring him the cheese Tortellini with Sausage. He was equally impressed! By the way, the large pasta plates contain considerably more to eat than the small plates and all of them are only 50¢ more and well worth it. The large Lasagna is only \$1.00 more.

FraGeno's Pizzeria

2600 Dodge Street, K-Mart Plaza, Dubuque, IA
563-582-7777 • E-mail: Fragenos@gmail.com
Also find them on Facebook!

HOURS: Mon – Thu: 11am – 9 pm, Fri – Sat: 11 am – 10 pm, Sun Closed

DINING STYLE: Come as you are **NOISE LEVEL:** Conversational

RECOMMENDATIONS: Calzone, Stromboli, Meatball Sandwich,

Italian Sub, Antipasto Salad, Build Your Own Pizza, All Deluxe Pizzas

LIQUOR SERVICE: None, **PRICE RANGE:** \$4.50 - \$23.00

PAYMENT OPTIONS: Cash, Local Checks, Visa,

MasterCard & Discover

ACCESSIBILITY: Front Door and Restrooms

KIDS POLICY: No Menu, Boosters **RESERVATIONS:** Yes

CATERING: No, **TAKE OUT:** Yes, **DELIVERY:** Yes

PARKING: K-Mart Plaza Parking Lot



The pizzas are all very well made. First of all, the dough and sauces are made fresh from scratch every day. Secondly, you get to pick your style of crust. Choose thin crust, regular crust, Chicago style pan or stuffed pan crust. Third, you can build your own pizza with a selection of over 23 toppings including the usual sausage, pepperoni and bacon. And some of the more unusual ones like sauerkraut, artichoke hearts, pineapple, shrimp, anchovies, jalapeños and hot banana pepper rings.



Gene has been noticing a tremendous increase in the demand for Chicago Style Pizzas. Already many people are returning because they say they have found a local place that serves pizza the way it tastes in downtown Chicago.



If you have had a long day and don't feel like making monumental pizza topping decisions you have two options. You can simply order your style of pizza in the Deluxe version. This means your pizza will have 9 toppings. They are pepperoni, sausage, green peppers, Canadian bacon, bacon, mushrooms, onions and black and green olives. Or you can order one of FraGeno's Specialties. There are eight of these including the Super BLT with bacon, lettuce, onion, cheese, Roma tomatoes and secret sauce. Or choose the Spaghetti Pizza with spaghetti or Taco Pizza with ground beef and cheese, tomatoes, black olives, onions, nacho chips, sour cream and taco sauce or the BBQ chicken with grilled chicken and Sweet Baby Ray's BBQ sauce.



Delivery is available to anywhere in the Tri-States. So far deliveries are going out to all parts of Dubuque, Asbury, East Dubuque and the surrounding areas. Gene says he doesn't have a helicopter but he will take your dinner to you as long as he can get to you by car!



Now throughout this article you probably noticed many of the food items are described as being stuffed. The sandwiches are stuffed with cold cuts, the Stromboli is stuffed with sausage and pepperoni and the Calzones are stuffed with all your favorite pizza toppings. And so, I must tell you, dear reader, when you leave FraGeno's Pizzeria you will also bestuffed!



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