

ARGOSY'S

Food For Thought

MARIO'S

1298 Main St., Dubuque, IA
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MariosDubuque.com

It is fitting I do my inaugural column on Mario's in Dubuque. When I moved from North Caldwell, New Jersey, to Dubuque 25 years ago, Mario's was the first restaurant I visited. After a wonderful dinner that was just like the Italian food I grew up on; Mario came to the table and in his big, booming voice said, "How was a your'a dinner?" I jokingly answered, "mezzo e mezzo," which means "half and half" in Italian and is a way of saying good but maybe not so much. Mario looked at me for a few seconds and then said, "Ahh, go back'a East!"



You see, Mario takes his Italian cuisine very seriously and is rightfully proud of it. Tonio Mario Bertolini and his lovely wife Angelina have been serving authentic Italian food in Dubuque for 33 years now. Tonio was born in Italy on a farm near Pescara and Angelina grew up near the Bertolini farm. According to Ryan Robinson, the son-in-law and one of the cooks, Tonio learned culinary arts by cooking on this family farm for friends and family. He then perfected his cooking skills by working in fine restaurants throughout France and Italy. Before moving to Dubuque, Tonio and Angelina operated a restaurant in the Queens borough of New York near JFK Airport. There is no doubt you can taste their experience in all of their time tested recipes.

When you enter Mario's, which has been at the corner of 13th and Main Streets all these years, you know

immediately the place is filled with regular customers, many who have been going there for almost as long as it has been open. Everyone who visits is treated like family. After a few minutes you understand most people are here not for the décor but for the food!



And the food! That's Italian! You must try the special dishes, and there are so many! The Sicilian salad wakes up your mouth with flavor. Have some pizza bread with or without cheese and be careful because it is addictive. Try the panzerotti, which is a deep-fried pizza dough turnover stuffed with whatever ingredients you would normally put on your favorite pizza.

The pastas are all delicious. Many of the sauces are made with secret recipes handed down to Tonio from his mother, Carmela. You will taste real Italian flavor with baked lasagna, manicotti, or stuffed shells. Come on Tuesday or Thursday nights and order the scrumptious pork chop a' la Mario: Two thick chops sautéed in red wine and banana peppers.



Of course, no self-respecting Italian restaurant is without veal and fresh "fruits of the sea." Try the veal scaloppini, marsala, milanese or parmigiana. For the sea food lover there is a delicate broiled salmon, broiled mahi-mahi and baked tilapia, as well as shrimp prepared three different ways and Alaskan



king crab.

There is no need for the meat connoisseur to feel left out. All of Mario's steaks are charbroiled and served in man-sized portions. For a wonderful change, enjoy the lamb steak or the steak pizzaiola (a select sirloin cooked in marinara sauce and dry wine).

You will be completely pleased and satisfied with any of these classic Italian dishes. However, you will definitely want to finish with Angelina's delightful homemade cannoli or tiramisu or spumoni ice cream for dessert.

Argosy's Rating:



Excellent Great Good Fair Poor
The number of stars is this reviewer's opinion. The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the reviewer and do not necessarily reflect the editorial opinions of 365ink Magazine. Comments: argomark@mchsi.com.

ATMOSPHERE:

Friendly and comfortable

SOUND LEVEL:

Conversational

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Pizza Bread; Sicilian Salad; Pizza; Panzerotti, Mario's Reasonable Snacks; Baked Lasagna; Stuffed Shells Florentine; Veal Marsala; Veal Cutlet Parmigiana; Half Charbroiled Chicken; Broiled Salmon; T-Bone or New York Steak; Steak Pizzaiola

LIQUOR SERVICE:

Full Bar; Wine List has mostly reasonably priced wines

PRICE:

Appetizers \$2 to \$10.75
Entrees \$8.25 to \$19.75

HOURS:

Bar: 11a-2a, Lunch: 11a-4:30p,
Dinner - 4:30p-10p Mon-Thurs,
4:30-11 Fri-Sat, Closed Sun.

RESERVATIONS:

Accepted for parties of 5+ only

PAYMENT OPTIONS:

Cash, Check, Debit, Major Credit

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS:

Yes. Restrooms not accessible

TAKE OUT

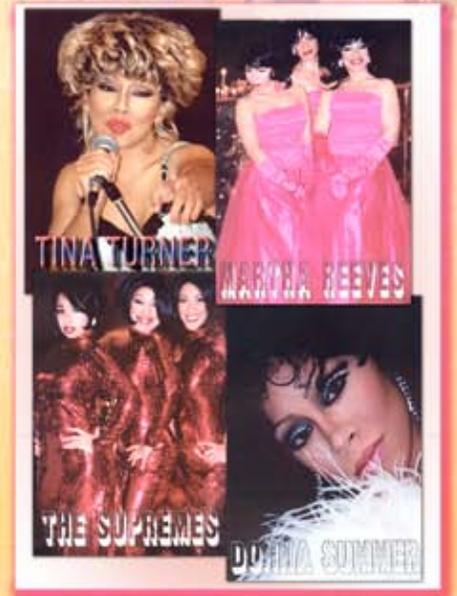
Yes

DELIVERY:

No

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