

{ 365ink dining: vinny vanucchi's little italy }



Vinny Vanucchi's Little Italy

180 Main St., Dubuque, IA, 563-588-9600 • VinnysDubuque.com
HOURS: Mon – Sat, 11 am – 10 pm, Sun, 11 am – 9 pm

ATMOSPHERE: Casual; Italian Family Theme

NOISE LEVEL: Conversational Front Room; Louder Back Room

RECOMMENDATIONS: Chick, Veal or Steak Marsala; Chicken or Veal Parmigiano; Chef Roberto's Sausage Ragù; Seafood Italiano; Pasta Ala Vinny; Pollo Compomare; Manicotti; Lasagna, and the complimentary parmesan garlic bread.

LIQUOR SERVICE: Full Bar; Specialty Martinis; 11 Beers on Tap, 12 Bottled Beers from 8 Countries and 4 States

PRICE RANGE: Apps: \$2.95 - \$12.95; Entrees: \$10.95 - \$23.95

RESERVATIONS: Dinner Only; 2 or more up to 150

PAYMENT OPTIONS: Cash, Debit, All Credit Cards, NO CHECKS

ACCESSIBILITY: Front Door and Restrooms

KIDS POLICY: Kids Menu; High Chairs; Boosters; Coloring

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



VINNY VANUCCHI'S LITTLE ITALY

by Rich Belmont

La Famiglia Siciliana di Vanucchi has finally arrived in Dubuque! Restaurateur's Jack and Deb Coulter have operated Vinny Vanucchi's Sicilian Restaurant in Galena for almost 19 years already. So after numerous requests from people on the west side of the Mississippi they have brought all of the family's signature dishes to our city. The same great meals from Galena are now right here like Uncle Tony's Pizza, Rocky's Raviolis, Auntie Nancy's Manicotti and Nana Lu's Lasagna.

You will notice right away the high quality components used in your dinners such as De Cecco pasta and Parmigiano Reggiano Cheese and Citterio Prosciutto di Parma Italian Ham.



All of the ingredients are fresh. Nothing frozen is allowed in this kitchen. The sauces are all made from scratch. For example, the White Sauce is a combination of heavy cream, milk, garlic, special spices and is simmered with parmesan and white cheddar cheeses. Alfredo Sauce is simply the White Sauce with white wine and garlic added to it. Vinny's hot sauce includes fresh basil, a red hot condiment, Extra Virgin olive oil, garlic and Arbol Chile peppers.



To say that all the meals are really good is an understatement. So let's start with lunch. The Sangwiches all contain carefully prepared ingredients. The slices of steak in the South Philly are sautéed with onions and mushrooms. The chicken breast is charbroiled and the Italian Beef is slow roasted and piled onto fresh baked bread. And speaking of bread be careful of the garlic bread because it's addictive. Just in

case you noticed Sangwich is not misspelled. It just happens to be the way sandwich is pronounced in Little Italy!



The Flatbread Pizzas are only available at the Dubuque location. They taste great and at prices from \$10.95 to \$12.95 they make a quick and inexpensive lunch for two to three people. You can order these for dinner as well and they even make a wonderful appetizer for 3 to 5 persons.

The dinners are all delectable and there are so many choices. There are eight Fettuccine dishes ranging from Carbonara: an alfredo white sauce with Prosciutto, mushrooms and peas to Chicken Romano in a red tomato basil sauce with chicken and mushrooms. Then there are all the baked and stuffed pastas like Auntie Gracie's Pasta Siciliano: cheese and fresh vegetables baked in a parmesan cream sauce and Nana Lu's Lasagna made with Ricotta cheese and mild Italian sausage with parmesan and mozzarella cheese.

The house specialties are more than special, they are excellent! The Pollo Compomare is a somewhat spicy chicken dish made with fresh tomatoes, mushrooms and broccoli over angel hair pasta and covered with a spicy cream sauce. The Seafood Italiano contains shrimp, scallops and Surimi Crabmeat in a white wine cream sauce made with parmesan, cheddar and mozzarella cheese and topped with a lobster tail. The Marsala dishes are made with high quality Marsala wine and if you just feel like a steak you can have a Choice Grade Angus Center Cut Sirloin hand cut in the kitchen and charbroiled to your liking. My favorite is Chef Roberto's Sausage Ragù. This scrumptious dish is prepared with spicy hot Italian sausage, fresh bell peppers, and mushrooms all sautéed in a little butter and then covered with a Marinara sauce containing fresh basil and garlic. Then it is baked with the homemade white sauce with mozzarella and drizzled with alfredo. If you like spicy dishes the Pasta Ala Vinny is linguini with shrimp, lobster and Surimi

crabmeat in olive oil, garlic and hot sauce. Any by the way all of the spicy dishes can be made even hotter, all you have to do is ask!

Perhaps you are not too hungry. So you might want to try a simple dinner of what I call mix and match. You can choose one of four pastas and then combine it with one of six sauces. For example, take angel hair and add a simple marinara or penne with a meatball or sausage.



The Chefs can easily handle special requests. Instead of Chicken Marsala you can order Veal. If you would rather have Veal Piccata instead of chicken just ask your server. They can also accommodate your dietary requirements and if you are watching your weight they will be happy to charbroil or steam many of the menu items.

The bar is well stocked with an assortment of beers. But a great Italian dinner calls for a good bottle of vino. There are over 80 wines in the cellar mostly from Italy and the US West Coast. Your server can make recommendations on wine pairings.

Visit on Sunday and bring all your family and friends. In keeping with Italian tradition, Sunday is reserved for long sumptuous dinners. Choose from four family style menus and pick three entrees. Then sit back and enjoy your company while you feast on baskets of garlic bread, bowls of salad and pass around the platters of penne pasta and your choice of lasagna, raviolis, sausage and peppers, or Chicken Parmigiano to name a few.



Vinny's is a great place for holiday parties too. There are private and semi private rooms available. In fact they can handle three parties at the same time and up to 150 guests. And of course, don't forget to ask to see the dessert tray! The Spumoni ice cream: a swirl of cherry, chocolate and pistachio flavors is always good. But the tiramisu and the cannoli stuffed with sweet ricotta cream only after you order it are superb!

The awning outside of Vinny's says Little Italy on it. But make no mistake the food is definitely Sicilian. And is there anything like it in Dubuque? Forgetaboutit!



Even though Jack (pictured on the right in the photo at the top of the page) is from Dublin, Ireland, Vinny's is an old world Sicilian restaurant. Jack's wife, Deb, grew up on Taylor Street, the heart of Chicago's Little Italy. Her grandmother (Nana in Italian) lived upstairs. Nana Lucille La Corte (Lu for short) taught her how to cook Italian and handed down her recipes from the old country. Jack developed his love for food as a young man selling food and produce in Ireland. After Jack and Deb got together they perfected the recipes for restaurant sized portions and started preparing them for all of us.

The new Vinny's has an expert staff. Besides Jack there is the General Manager, Jake Bettcher. He started his career as a busser and dishwasher at the Dodge House. Then he went to Vinny's Galena and moved up the ladder from waiter to manager. The Executive Chef is Mark Relyea. He began cooking in Binghamton, New York and now has over 15 years experience as a chef.

When you visit Vinny's Dubuque the managers will be pleased to show you around. Jack and Deb invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in the remodeling of the former 180 Main Restaurant. The kitchen has been enclosed and there are now several separate dining areas. Take a few moments to look at all the portraits hanging everywhere. Almost all of them are family members and there are more than one hundred of them. There is a small fortune in picture frames, let alone the costs of refurbishing and enlarging very old photographs. The products on display are a showcase of the ingredients used in the recipes. They are not for sale except for the Italian Vinaigrette House Dressing, Spicy Homemade Vinny's Sauce and Extra Virgin Olive Oil.