

Pizza served with a global accent

Written by MARK JAEGER

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Portabella owner draws from 30 years of experience with new Port restaurant

Izzo Jonuzi, owner of the newly opened Portabella Pizzeria & Restaurant, came to Port Washington via a circuitous route.

Born in Macedonia, he has lived in Croatia, Switzerland and Italy, and operated restaurants in New Jersey and Florida.



Despite such a diverse passport, Jonuzi had an easy explanation for why he chose to offer Italian fare for the restaurant his family now runs in the former Dairy Queen building.

“Everybody loves Italian food, and we make very good thin-crust pizza,” Jonuzi said.

The restaurant, which is staffed by seven family members, officially opened Monday.

“We spent the last three and a half months cleaning up the building. The basement was filled with garbage, some of it from Dairy Queen,” Jonuzi said.

Although new to the community, he said, several local residents have filled him in on the troubles businesses at the location have encountered. It includes a series of short-lived restaurants.

“I think the problems in the past came because of bad management. We are a family business, and we have done this before. That is going to make all the difference,” Jonuzi said.

“We have a one-year lease with an option to buy the building, and if things go as we think we intend to stay here a very, very long time.”

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Jonuzi said his 30 years in the food business will help him where other operators at the site failed.

The restaurant does not have a liquor license, and that is fine with Jonuzi.

“When you serve alcohol, sometimes you invite problems. We will be fine without a liquor license, at least to start,” he said.



Jonuzi said his family live in Sheboygan, but the charm of Port Washington quickly won him over.

“It is a beautiful city, and the people here have been so friendly and helpful. People are not like that everywhere,” he said.

The restaurant has been serving sporadically for more than a week before the official opening to allow the workers to get used to the new facility.

“We have had people come in, and then tell their friends they have to try our food. I recognize one man who has been back three times already,” Jonuzi said.

He said that kind of customer loyalty is essential for a restaurant to survive in a small community.

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“It is nice to have tourists stop in, but we really need the local people to do their business here. In a small town, word of mouth does a lot for business. If you give people good food and good service, you are going to get good customers,” Jonuzi said.

He said quality will keep diners coming back.

“We make our own dough and pasta, and only use fresh ingredients. You won’t find anything frozen in our kitchen,” Jonuzi said.

Befitting a pizzeria, the specialty pizzas are likely to become customer favorites. They include a five-cheese pizza (ricotta, American, Swiss, provolone and mozzarella), the works (pepperoni, sausage, black olives, mushrooms, onions, green peppers, ground beef and spinach) and vegetarian (mushrooms, onions, green peppers, garlic, spinach, black olives, broccoli and fresh tomato).

There are also calzones and stromboli, along with an assortment of sandwiches, pastas and other entrees.

Jonuzi said his personal favorite is the chicken Romano.

With three decades in the business, he said, he has learned not to sample everything in the kitchen.

“I used to be 40 pounds heavier, but I watch what I eat now. I have more veggies on my pizza,” he said.

The restaurant is open 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., Sundays through Thursdays, and 11 a.m. to midnight, Fridays and Saturdays.

Image Information: THE OWNER OF Portabella Pizzeria in Port Washington hopes good food and service will counter a history of failed restaurants in the former Dairy Queen building. At left, Izzo Januzi served a signature thin crust pepperoni pizza. Pasta, sandwiches and other entrees also highlight the menu. Januzi said lunch service should draw the business crowd.

Photos by Mark Jaeger

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