

LORI'S PICKS



Chez Mike

596 Columbia Turnpike • Hannaford Plaza • East Greenbush, NY •
518 479-4730 • ChezMikeRestaurant.com

Chez Mike is a gem of a restaurant that is tucked away in a shopping plaza in Rensselaer County. You might not typically think that a first-rate restaurant would be located in a shopping plaza, but trust me when I tell you that from the food to the upscale bistro decor, Chez Mike is exemplary.

Michael Cohen is both the owner and chef at Chez Mike. Chef Michael is a graduate of The Culinary Institute of America. His resume is impressive and helps to explain his superb cuisine. Everything on the menu at Chez Mike is homemade, and changes are constantly made depending on what is in season. The choices were mouth-watering, but I quickly decided on the chopped salad with crispy artichoke for my appetizer, and the vegetable lasagna with feta, for my entrée.

My chopped salad consisted of finely chopped romaine hearts, tomato, roasted red peppers, red onion and Kalamata olives, all tossed in lemon vinaigrette with feta cheese, then topped with warm, crispy artichoke hearts. It was a wonderful fusion of flavors, and a total delight

on a hot summer evening. The crispy artichokes were warmed through perfectly, and insanely delicious.

At this point I was very excited to dig into my entrée. Just imagine fresh pasta, baked with roasted squash, eggplant, spinach, tomato sauce, feta and parmesan cheeses, topped off with extra virgin olive oil. It was incredible! The pasta was so light, the tomato sauce had a wonderfully delicate taste, and the vegetables with the feta and parmesan cheeses were outstanding. This dish truly was a masterpiece.

This superb dining experience was ended with a stellar cup of decaffeinated cappuccino, and a slice of J.S. Watkins pineapple, carrot, cheesecake. It was spectacular, and a perfect way to finish a lovely evening.

I strongly recommend that you try Chez Mike for yourself. Chez Mike is open Tuesday-Saturday for lunch and dinner, and Sunday for brunch. The menu is wonderful, not to mention the daily specials. The evening I was there

the prices ranged from \$8.95-\$27.95. The food is exceptional, and the service outstanding. Great care is put into little details, like the two mini homemade chocolate chip cookies that accompany your bill. Lori's Picks gives Chez Mike a rave review!









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LORI'S PICKS



Paolo Lombardi's Ristorante

104 West Sand Lake Road • Route 150 • Wynantskill, NY •
518 283-0202 • PaoloLombardis.com

Paolo Lombardi's has been a premier Capital Region Italian restaurant for two decades. Located in Rensselaer County, it has been a favorite spot for many, to celebrate their special occasions, or enjoy an evening of fine dining.

There is no doubt that everyone will find something to their liking at Paolo Lombardi's. From a vast assortment of appetizers, to entrees ranging from pasta, chicken, beef, vegetarian, and a plethora of fabulous veal dishes, it is an impressive menu by all standards. Both northern and southern Italian dishes are featured. Besides their traditional menu, Paolo Lombardi's has a 1986 menu (the year they opened). The menu is more moderately priced, with the portions being smaller.

We decided on the antipasto caldo, to begin our meal. It was an assortment of many tempting warm appetizers. It included shrimp scampi, clams casino, stuffed mushroom caps eggplant rolled with prosciutto and fontina cheese, roasted red peppers, fresh broccoli, and fried asparagus. My companion and I dove into this beautiful dish. Everything was fresh and delicious, and

it was a lot of fun sampling so many different appetizers.

For our entrees we both went for veal dishes. I chose the scallopine alla Carozzella, while my companion had the veal Oscar. Our meals came with a mixed green salad and a choice of Italian potatoes or pasta. My dish was batter dipped medallions of veal sautéed with mushrooms and prosciutto, and finished in a cream marinara sauce with fresh mozzarella cheese. Everything about my meal was exemplary. It was aromatic and brimming with flavor. My companion's veal Oscar was also a hit. The dish consisted of medallions of veal topped with crabmeat, fresh asparagus and hollandaise sauce. It was a fusion of marvelous flavors, and a total delight for the palate. We ended our meal with a piece of chocolate mousse pie that was made in house. It was a silky, decadent, and we thoroughly enjoyed it.

Paolo Lombardi's is a wonderful Italian restaurant that offers a wide variety of Italian dishes, and is only too happy to accommodate you in any request you might have. Our

waitress was extremely attentive, and Paolo came around to each table at least once to make sure his guests were pleased. It is a bit pricier than most Italian restaurants, but sometimes we all need to treat ourselves.



The New West Ave. Pizzeria

99 West Avenue • Saratoga Springs, NY •
518 581-9999 or 581-1314 or 581-8785 • WestAvePizzeria.com

Who does not love a good neighborhood pizzeria? We all have our favorite place to get the perfect slice. There is a brand new pizzeria in Saratoga called The New West Ave. Pizzeria, and let me tell you, their pizza is great! The owners of The New West Ave. Pizzeria are the former owners of Saratoga's Oma's Pizza. They have successfully taken what was the previous West Ave. Pizzeria, and made it a friendly, family style Italian restaurant and pizzeria.

Chef and owner Vito Amato and his partner Keith Loeber are determined to make The New West Ave. Pizzeria something special. As Chef Vito explained to me, 90% of everything they make is made on premises. This includes Chef Vito's special tomato sauce, which I assure you, is absolutely delicious. Every ingredient they use is top quality.

I knew I had to try some of their pizza, so I ordered a slice of plain cheese, and my companion had the pepperoni. I also wanted to taste one of their dinners. I decided on eggplant parmigiana, while my companion decided on the chicken Soerrento. Let me say that the menu offers many appetizer selections, salads, pasta dinners, calzones, wraps, subs, gourmet pizzas, and many classic Italian dishes. Our meals came with Italian bread, a side of pasta, and a garden salad.

We were first brought our pizza. Wow... it was awesome. The sauce was absolutely perfect. The cheese was not too heavy or too sparse, and the dough was thin with an amazing texture and taste. In fact, while we were eating the people next to us were commenting on how fantastic the pizza was, and specifically mentioned how incredible the sauce was. There is no doubt that The New West Ave. Pizzeria has outstanding pizza, but I was curious to see how our entrees would be.

The portions were enormous. One meal was definitely enough to satisfy two people. My eggplant parmigiana was very good. Again, the sauce was tremendous, which is key to a great eggplant parmigiana. Everything else about the dish was also excellent. It was far superior to what you get in a typical pizzeria/restaurant. My companion loved his chicken Sorrento and commented on the quality of the meat. We both totally enjoyed our meals, and had quite a bit left to take home. What a value!

The New West Ave. Pizzeria/Restaurant is going to become popular very quickly. The service is fast and friendly. It has stupendous pizza and awesome food that is high quality and immense in quantity. Chef Vito plans to constantly take it up a notch, and will be adding marsala dishes and calamari (just to name a few) to his menu in the near future. If you are a student or faculty member, you receive 10% off any order. If you want to eat some incredible pizza, or try some other first-rate Italian fare without breaking the bank, The New West Ave. Pizzeria is a must try.

