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pg. 52

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page 14

Anthony's new bar offers an array of wines, beers, and custom cocktails in an elegant, welcoming atmosphere.



Setting the Bar

Known for its house-made Italian-American specialties, **Anthony's Malvern** adds a full bar and an extensive wine list to its already top-notch dining experience.



ANTHONY'S MALVERN HAS BEEN A FIXTURE IN THE MALVERN COMMUNITY FOR NEARLY 30 YEARS. Since he took over the restaurant seven years ago, owner Anthony Natale has worked to make sure the restaurant's food and drink not only maintained a high quality but soared above expectations. Now, with the addition of a full bar and expansive wine list, Anthony's is poised to offer customers the best experience yet.

Previously a BYOB restaurant, Anthony's will now feature offerings including 10 beers on tap as well as a selection of custom cocktails. As Natale says, "We want to let people know that we've evolved."

"Our drinks menu will be wine-heavy, with a huge selection," he says. "We invested in a dispensing and preservation system that will allow us to give 26 different options for wine by the glass and flights. We'll also be doing craft cocktails with fresh ingredients and all our own citrus juices. Our signature cocktails will feature riffs on modern classics that incorporate Italian liqueurs and amari into the cocktails."

Anthony himself has a long history in the restaurant industry. His parents, now retired, owned Rocco's Pizza of Exton, a neighborhood staple in its own community, where Natale grew up learning how to make Italian-American fare.

Though Anthony worked for a time after college in the medical equipment field, he says the pull of the kitchen was too great. It wasn't too long before he found himself back at a restaurant.

"Anthony's had a good name in the community, and people consider it an institution in Malvern," he says. "At the time, my wife and I just had our first kid and I didn't want to jump into a brand-new restaurant. It was nice to take over an existing business that was successfully running but bring my intuition and insight into it, seeing if I could keep the same feel but improve things in different ways. The chefs and waitstaff were already amazing, and that made it easier for me to focus on improving the business."

The menu still features Italian-American favorites, but upgrades abound.

"My whole idea was that we're an Italian-American place," he says. "People know what Italian-American is—dishes like spaghetti and meatballs and chicken parmesan—but I wanted to know how we could do things better. Everyone has eaten at places with cheap sauce and frozen chicken patties, and I wanted to elaborate. We've never eaten like that in my house growing up, and it was great to see that the restaurant was already making several items by hand."



A few signature dishes from the menu at Anthony's Malvern.

Anthony is also immensely proud of the pasta-making equipment brought in all the way from Italy.

"We go through the whole process of making our own pasta," Natale says. "We have three big machines in house now. One makes all different shapes, then the other two make gnocchi and ravioli."

Pasta coming out of Anthony's Pasta Laboratorio, as he calls it, is meant to harken back to Sunday dinners at Nonna's house. Natale had some of his most influential childhood experiences making dinner for the family surrounded by savory aromas,

loved ones, and laughter.

Pasta runs through a brass-die pasta extruder, leading to pastas with unparalleled texture and unique pores—perfect for soaking up house-made sauces. As for ingredients, Natale follows the adage that simple is best; pasta features just two ingredients, semolina flour and water, with egg pastas featuring the addition of eggs. Whereas many restaurants practice "flash cooking," or reheating precooked pastas, such an idea is out of the question at Anthony's.

"I think 90 percent of restaurants out there, or higher, pre-cook their pasta," Anthony says. "When you do it that way, you can put out a dish faster, but you're going to lose the entire *al dente* aspect of the pasta. Because we make our pasta fresh, and don't allow it to dry out completely, we can cook a pasta in four minutes that might take nine minutes with boxed dry pasta. That's why we don't have to pre-cook pastas to be ready for rush hour."

Such carefully made pastas need quality sauces to match, of course.

"We make all our own sauces in house," Anthony shares. "We use San Marzano tomatoes from Italy. Our cheeses—Pecorino Romano and Parmigiano Reggiano—we bring in wheels and grate it ourselves. You can make something real simple and it could be good, or you can go the extra step for something homey in feel and divine in taste."

Sauces don't just stop there. Anthony's offers diners the opportunity to create their own pasta featuring any number of sauces—pink vodka sauce, alfredo, mushroom, bolognese meat sauce, pesto, etc.

While some diners may find it difficult to choose a favorite dish at Anthony's, house special pastas include the painstakingly prepared gnocchi, made from scratch with russet potatoes for the fluffiest possible texture, as well as the ravioli. Anthony's is also renowned for its pizza, which is no surprise considering Natale's Italian-American roots. "I took the recipe from my dad," Natale notes. "The recipe has now been through my family for



“**We are a neighborhood place where everybody knows your name.**”

—Anthony Natale, owner of Anthony's Malvern



three generations.”

For seafood, lobster lovers can rejoice in the house-made lobster-stuffed ravioli in a blush sauce. Visitors also love the chicken piccata; linguine and clams, served with white wine sauce or marinara; and per-

haps the crown jewel, *pasta di mare*, which features a medley of mussels, clams, shrimp, and scallops, all in the house special marinara over fresh fettuccine. Those with a sweet tooth won't want to miss the tiramisu, made in house as well.

Rotating daily specials show off the kitchen staff's creative side. "The chefs are able to choose what they like to do for the day," Natale says. "That allows a creative aspect to the job. They come up with some extraordinary dishes every day, and we're thinking of doing seasonal specials as well."

Above all, Natale wants diners to find Anthony's to be a home away from home, where the day's stress can be traded in for a lovingly prepared meal in a relaxing atmosphere.

"One of the things we love is just the idea that someone can come to us to improve their day," Anthony says. "You can come here and have a great meal without cleaning a dish or picking up a pot or pan. We'd like to set a different type of culture in the restaurant where we're personable with everybody. Malvern is small, so we see the same customers a lot of the time. We are a neighborhood place where everybody knows your name. We do this because we want to make people happy." ■

→ **Anthony's Malvern**
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