

suburban life

Arosso Pizzeria & Ristorante in Fairless Hills offers the finest flavors of Sicily, including vegan and gluten-free options.

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A Taste of Sicily

AROSSO PIZZERIA & RISTORANTE IN FAIRLESS HILLS OFFERS THE FINEST FLAVORS OF SICILY, INCLUDING VEGAN AND GLUTEN-FREE OPTIONS.

BY **LEIGH STUART**
PHOTOS BY **ALISON DUNLAP**

“I was born in a pizzeria,” jokes David Monterosso, proprietor of Arosso Pizzeria & Ristorante in Fairless Hills. “I’m Sicilian, and my mother and father came to America in their 20s and opened a pizzeria. I grew up there, then I got older and I made the pizzeria into a restaurant and started serving more dinners and things like that.”

Arosso embraces its Sicilian roots fully, as evidenced by its cuisine and even its Instagram page. The restaurant’s Insta handle: arosstouchofsicily, or “Arosso, A Touch of Sicily.”

“When I was a kid, I’d spend my summers in Sicily with my grandma,” Monterosso adds. “I watched my grandma, my mother, and all my aunts cook. I’m always around food, and I’ve always been around food.”

Though it is celebrating the one-year anniversary of its new location in December, Arosso has been a Fairless Hills staple for far longer. It opened its doors at another location almost 15 years ago.

“Our house special is shrimp and crab meat in a pink vodka sauce,” he says of Arosso’s best-loved penne dish. “Pelto with

alfredo has shrimp, chicken, mushrooms, and scallops in pasta, and that’s with either marinara or alfredo. People also really like the seafood *pescatore*, which has mussels, clams, shrimp, and calamari in a red or white sauce.”

The delights don’t stop there. Tender, succulent lobster appears across the menu, with dishes such as the *pescatore* scampi pizza leading the list of customer favorites. This dish, which Monterosso humbly describes as “a scampi pizza,” offers guests a medley of *fruits de mer* including shrimp, scallops, lobster, and crab sauteed in garlic butter sauce and set decadently atop a pizza crust.

“We do a Neapolitan-style pizza with more of a chunky sauce,” Monterosso says. “We have a stone oven, versus the majority of pizza ovens which are steel, so we can do a wood burning-style pizza. Stone ovens hold the heat inside more and cooks food faster and pizzas crispier.”

Another favorite: the “Brooklyn pie,” a throwback to his grandma’s square plum tomato sauce pie with fresh mozzarella, basil, and olive oil.

While people with dietary restrictions often find themselves at a loss for options at most pizzeria restaurants, Arosso can more than accommodate a variety of diners, from those of the vegetarian and vegan persuasion to gluten-free visitors.

“People in this area don’t really have a

lot of vegan options, so we added a vegan cheesesteak, vegan chicken that people can do as a parm or cutlet, plus vegan cheese and vegan mayo,” he says. “I was getting customers who were going to Philly, even New York, for vegan food. I thought: *Why not try it here?* People in this area don’t have to drive to the city to find a restaurant with vegan options.”

As for gluten-free options, Monterosso’s restaurant offers gluten-free dough for stromboli, pizza, sandwiches, and even cannoli. He says practically the whole menu—“except the lasagna, onion rings, and stuffed shells”—can be made gluten-free. The inspiration for his decision to provide such offerings stems from a single diner about 15 years ago.

“Around 2007, a customer came in and asked about gluten-free,” he says. “At the time, I didn’t know what that was, but I gained knowledge. By 2009, I was making my own gluten-free dough. From there, it just blew up.”

Like its former location, the new iteration of Arosso offers sit-down dining as well as banquet space. The dining room seats up to 50, and the banquet space can accommodate 55 diners. In both spaces, guests have their pick of a bevy of fantastic dishes, such as house-special seafood dishes, pizzas, and more.

As a lifelong member of the hospitality industry, Monterosso could credit any number of things for inspiring his love for food. After a brief pause, he says with a laugh, “I like to eat.” ■



➔ **Arosso Pizzeria & Ristorante**

**504 Lincoln Highway
Fairless Hills, PA 19030
(215) 295-1311
arossosfairless.com**