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Bacco Restaurant Group prides itself on offering great food, consistent quality, and, powerhouse women, shore bets, etc..

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Finding Family

by LEIGH STUART | photography by JODY ROBINSON

Bacco Restaurant Group prides itself on offering great food, consistent quality, and, most of all, a “family table” atmosphere.

Neither raising a family nor creating a thriving restaurant business is for the faint of heart, yet Frank Cipullo, founder of the Bacco family of restaurants and father of two (Christine and Jacqueline), has succeeded in both.

Starting 30 years ago with a venue in Washington Crossing, Frank earned a reputation for transforming and reinvigorating tired spaces. Frank, the original owner of La Stalla in Newtown, sold that restaurant in the early 2000s and retired not too long ago, but Bacco Restaurant Group continues to thrive under Christine’s leadership.

This of course includes the crown jewel of the family’s hospitality empire, Bacco Italian Restaurant in North Wales, which was founded in 2004.

Bacco Bistro, the Doylestown BYOB location, opened in 2009, and Bacco Centro BYOB opened in Richboro in 2020. Most recently, the family added The Cristallo Room to their panoply of locations.

“It’s an elegant space that we’re using for regular dining and private events,” Christine notes. “It’s connected to the Bistro, and the private event space seats about 75 people.”

While each location in the restaurant group has its own unique identity, Christine says freshness and apex hospitality are key areas of focus at all of their properties.

“I really encourage relationships with a customer, that’s number one,” Christine says. “Personality is everything. I believe that you should definitely be building your relationship with a customer before you can sell an item on that menu, because I know they’re going to

come back and they’re going to request you. Remembering their name, remembering something that they ate before, that goes a long way because people don’t really get treated like that anymore.”

At Bacco, “regulars” come back not just for fresh and delicious food, but also for that air of friendship and kindness.

“Every day, our Bacco experience is about our family, and I say ‘our family’ because it really is basically my family,” says Justin Van Houten, CFO and regional manager, who started with Bacco as a dishwasher back in 2010. “My time here has taught me way more than I could have ever experienced somewhere else. We’re so lucky to be able to do what we love and to give to our customers and give to our community.”

Taste of Tradition

Having a father who grew up in Naples, Italy, Frank Cipullo found it easy to embrace a passion for food. So much of Bacco’s menu comes from recipes influenced by his history, his background, his family. Christine says he continues to create new recipes, even in retirement. She jokes that he has the best “restaurant”—the kitchen of his home in

Naples, Florida, that is—“because he cooks for everybody all the time.”

Back up north in Pennsylvania, the idea of welcoming guests at each location to a memorable dining experience is alive and kicking. Tables of four or more have the option of family-style dining, which features large portions of dishes to be shared around the table.

One standout menu item revolves around a cheese wheel. Bacco Centro and the Bacco flagship location both offer fresh parmesan pasta crafted tableside inside a cheese wheel, so that each diner can soak up the flavors and ambience of a wholly unique experience.

Christine and Justin agree that Bacco's coal-fired pizzas are must-try items as well.

“We're well known for our pizzas,” Christine says. “The Drunken Brooklyn, with the vodka sauce, is made in an iron pan and coal-fired. People love it.”

Justin adds, “And the pizzas are first cooked in a deck oven and finished in a coal-fired oven to give them that nice crisp.”

Aligning with the beloved Italian *dolce vita* tradition, libations are an integral part of Bacco's North Wales menu. One particularly unique offering is “Cremoncello,” Bacco's answer to limoncello but with the luxurious addition of cream.

“Our big thing was at the end of meals, we used to give a Sambuca or a limoncello,” Christine shares. “So my dad came up with Cremoncello. We started with lemon, and now we have a few different flavors that we sell.”

Other flavors including chocolate, orange, and coconut have been a big hit as well. So big, in fact, that Bacco has begun branding the product.

“We have a few restaurants, and we want people to experience the same food at each location,” Justin says, noting that consistency grew in importance to the restaurant group as it became more successful. “That's when we started to put our heads together and say, ‘OK, we have a huge kitchen in North Wales; let's start mass-producing our most famous dishes.’”

Procedural innovation and streamlining of this sort ensures best-loved dishes such as meatballs, long hot peppers, and specialty sauces meet diners' expectations every time, regardless of the location.

A true innovation, the BYOB locations even offer lockers for patrons who want to have their favorite libation waiting for them on arrival.

Just Desserts

Those with a sweet tooth will not be disappointed when dining at any Bacco location, as living the sweet life is just a matter of course.

“Our homemade cheesecake is one of the best I think I've ever had in my life,”



Each location in Bacco Restaurant Group has its own unique identity. Bacco Centro, a BYOB in Richboro, opened its doors in 2020.



Christine says. “Mimi makes all of our family desserts, and the cheesecake with graham cracker crust and a caramel drizzle is phenomenal.”

The tiramisu and bread pudding are glorious options as well, she adds. Justin notes one of the most popular seasonal offerings, the Key lime pie, is something guests look forward to as well.

Streamlined processes and production again ensure consistent flavors throughout. As Justin says, “Now, you can go to each location and after your great meal, you know you're going to have the exact same cheesecake, bread pudding, and brownie wherever you go, because they're made fresh and delivered to each location to be served to our customers.”

All that noted, Bacco Restaurant Group

looks poised to continue building upon a 30-year legacy of success. Ahead, Christine hopes to expand to more locations to serve even more people: “Hopefully, throughout the whole world,” she says with a little laugh. “Or something else that's massive.” ■

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For more on Bacco Restaurant Group's locations throughout the region, visit baccobacco.com.