

At Sal's, family and community define the business

Sal Mazzurco follows his father's footsteps running the family Italian restaurant

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Sal's Italian Restaurant didn't always look the way it does now. Established in 1977, it was originally a high-end Italian cuisine restaurant, the kind where the tables are covered in white tablecloths and fine glassware and Burlington residents dress up to sit down.

"Burlington has never been a real high-end town," current owner Sal Mazzurco said. Mazzurco's father, who ran the restaurant when it first opened, wanted to start something new. He pulled out all the stops of a gourmet experience, but he soon found out that it wasn't the best way to connect to the community.

A Family Affair

One day, Mazzurco's father folded up the white tablecloths, put away the glassware and went for more of a pizzeria-style restaurant where people could relax with their loved ones on a regular basis. "He built the restaurant more around families, which is what we are known for," Mazzurco said.

That mission – to build community and focus on family – is still at the heart of everything they do today.

Mazzurco grew up in the restau-



Sal's Italian Restaurant owner Sal Mazzurco says he and his workers use 1500 pounds of flour for pizza dough every week.

rant and started working for his dad when he was eight years old. He had a few jobs at other restaurants and a local tavern while growing up, but he eventually grew tired of the nightlife scene and ended up running the family business.

Mazzurco became manager of Sal's Italian Restaurant a year before his father died. Currently, he manages the restaurant while raising his two kids, four-year-old Giovanni and two-year-old Gabriella.

To keep the family tradition alive, Mazzurco still makes all the food from scratch. Their most popular dish is their pizza, closely followed by the chicken parmesan. Mazzurco said they use about 1500 pounds of flour for pizza dough every week and cook 80 pounds of

WHAT'S COOKIN'

1500

pounds of flour for pizza dough is used every week.

80

pounds of chicken parmesan is cooked every week.

40

gallons of Sal's special homemade sauce is cooked in just one batch.

parm. Their special sauce is cooked in homemade batches 40 gallons at a time.

The menu contains more than four pages of options. Entrees range from \$10 to \$16 and include meat dishes and salads in addition to traditional Italian pizza and pasta cuisine.

Community Connection

Having grown up in the area, Mazzurco feels strong ties to the local community. He sees families who have eaten there for up to four generations. "We've built such a regular clientele here in the Burlington market," Mazzurco said.

In fact, Mazzurco stayed close to home for college. He is an alumnus of Elon University.

IF YOU GO...

Cuisine: Italian food
Location: 402 Huffman Mill Road
Hours: 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sun–Thu, 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. Fri–Sat
Cost: \$10–\$16

Elon students make up a large part of his clientele, and Mazzurco enjoys seeing the familiar faces. "As a student, I got to know a lot of people, and after graduation, I knew a lot of people from Elon," Mazzurco said.

Because he's been working at the restaurant for so long, Mazzurco says he likes to watch Elon students grow up and come back to Elon during Homecoming. "A lot of them are very great kids," Mazzurco said.

Mazzurco sees some students come in three to four times a week, and he loves to provide an environment where groups of friends can hang out.

Occasionally, Mazzurco likes to walk around Elon's campus with his own kids. "I like to see how much the campus has changed, and when I go back, sometimes it blows my mind."

Mazzurco also likes to go to community events and give back. For ElonThon April 13-14, Sal's Restaurant will be donating pizza for the dancers. The restaurant also sponsored a soccer field at Joe Davidson Park.

He says residents choose to spend money on local businesses, so it's important to donate locally.

"Community involvement is a big part of the restaurant business because it builds relationships with the locals," Mazzurco said.

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