

Mamma Mia, That's a Spaced-out Meatball

BY BARBARA ANN ROSENBERG

Pasta and tomato sauces aren't all there is to Italian cooking—not by a long shot. Italy boasts a rich, varied and sometimes delicate cuisine despite any impression to the contrary you might get in some local spaghetti joints. You sort of pay your money and take your chances when you venture out of the standard South Philadelphia restaurants (where you *know* the food's authentic) and begin to roam around looking for other places closer to home or near someplace else.

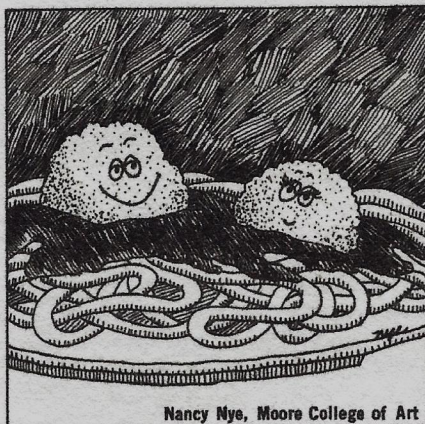
Sometimes you can really luck out, though. For instance at **Pinocchio's**, 254 S. 15th Street on the corner of Latimer, a stone's throw from the Academy of Music and Shubert, you'll find as fine a saltimbocca as ever a Roman chef prepared. From the outside the place looks like a B-girl joint, but don't be put off—it isn't. Just try to get yourself into a European frame of mind and think of it as a trattoria, where the food matters more than the decor.

Inside you'll find a smallish room dominated by a plastic garlanded bar, and decorated with a curious mélange of color photographs and a large cut-out figure of Pinocchio with neon flashing eyes. The whole effect is pretty camp—certainly not elegant, but not at all unpleasant.

But remember, it's *food* you're after here. And food you'll get, lovingly and tenderly prepared by an old-country chef who, when he's not too busy, has been known to stand in his undershirt in the kitchen door to check up on the reception his artistry is getting.

He produces such things as a lobster tail, stuffed with crab and topped by a white clam sauce in an imaginative dish called lobster Vesuvio, and it's worth every penny of the \$6.95 it costs. Shrimp Pinocchio stuffed with crab (\$5.50); veal Florentina on a bed of greens (\$4.95); linguine Pinocchio with shrimp, clams and crab in white sauce (\$4.75)—all are excellent. Mediterranean salad (\$3.50 for two) is a winner for a first course.

There are steaks and veal done in many ways (including the aforementioned



saltimbocca) and seafood and a variety of pastas—a full menu with enough tasty choices to satisfy all manner of eaters. The only mild caveat is directed toward the spaghetti that comes as a choice with most of the entrees—the ravioli is better. Lunch: 11-3; Dinner: 4-1. Closed Sunday. There's a good selection of Italian wines served with a flourish. Telephone KI 6-8065.

If you're out Main Line way and in the mood for Italian fare, you might land at **Martini's** on Lancaster Pike in Devon. It's a favorite with the locals, for some unknown reason.

Here the chef's sole claim to fame is that he produces one all-purpose sauce to cover almost everything he serves. The majority of each batch doubtless serves its primary purpose and gets ingested, but somehow enough of the excess seems to escape from the hapless strands it's meant to coat and lends a certain *je ne sais quoi* of atmosphere as it accumulates on the murals.

There's lasagna and veal Parmesan and all the routine staples of southern Italy but only one dish comes across with any finesse: spaghetti with red clam sauce. The white clam sauce is listless and everything else tastes as if it all came out of the same pot. If you are still determined, Martini's is open 11 a.m.-10:30 p.m. and serves continuously.

On the other hand, far-out Jersey residents fare pretty well with their local *osteria*, **Chateau Bilaz**. White

Horse Pike in Hammonton, very near to the Hammonton exit on the Atlantic City Expressway. Mrs. Bilazo cooks her sauces with lots of TLC, dishes up tasty salads full of cheese and olives and anchovies, and uses the finest baby veal. Somehow, you manage to overlook the incongruity of stuffing away all this fine cuisine in the forest of tole lamps and maple that decorates this early-American style "chateau."

The bar and wine cellar are outstanding—generous drinks at fair prices; every Italian wine you could want, and a reasonable selection of American and French ones thrown in for good measure.

Complete dinners here go for about \$6, and include nibbles of a zesty provolone and olives, salad, spaghetti or linguini and a choice of veal forcemaggio; steak; or sausage, meatballs and veal, all accompanied by a generous portion of sautéed mushrooms and peppers and topped off by dessert.

Daintier eaters can put together their own combinations with fewer courses or settle for smaller dinners including salad and spaghetti (with sausage, meatballs or a combination of both) for \$3.50 including dessert.

It's gentle, non-explosive food and should suit diner-out types who make the shore run. Doors open at 4. Call 1-609-561-0669.

The reason you might be in the Trenton area is anybody's guess, but if you are, there's a real old-world kitchen at **Homestead Inn** (more familiarly known as Nello and Chick's) on Kuser Road, on the outskirts.

It's an old ramshackle farmhouse and looks for all the world as if it were a Charles Addams creation. Homestead has been in business since 1939, and it may have been painted once since. But they serve an honest drink and the chef, who hails from Perugia, knows what he's about.

You can call for a reservation (1-609-587-9851) or take your chances, but the place seats only about 50 people, and it is a bit out of the way. There's



OW
stir the fire and
close the shutters
fast. So let us welcome
peaceful evening in.
The Inn of peaceful
evenings, Treadway.
In the Ordinary Room,
rest before the fire and
have a drink or two.
At dinner, time will
go as slowly or as
fast as you decide.
And fun comes easily,
naturally in this warm,
welcoming atmosphere.

St. Davids, Pa., Rt. 30
TREADWAY INN
Luncheon Noon—2:30 P.M. Daily
Dinner 5:30 P.M.—9:30 P.M. Daily
12:30 P.M.—8:00 P.M. Sunday
Cocktails 11:00 A.M.—1:00 A.M. Daily
except Sunday

*Philadelphia's Finest
Restaurant Classique*

*Le
Bec-Fin*

*Chef and Host:
Monsieur Georges Perrier
Formerly Head Chef - LaPanetiere*

*1312 Spruce St.
Philadelphia, Pa.
PE 2-3000*

no menu, so if you call to reserve, inquire about what they're serving. Depending on his mood, the person who answers might or might not tell you, but it's pretty safe to assume they will always have steak and chicken in some form, and sometimes lamb chops and extras like stuffed mushrooms or eggplant.

You place your actual order with the bartender while you're enjoying one of his concoctions, and it's then that you discuss the fine points of which pasta you'll have that evening—rigatoni or fettucini or what, and how it should be dressed to complement your choice of entree. It comes properly al dente without prior specification on your part.

Chicken cacciatore is fragrantly sauced with sherry—no tomatoes, thank God. Steak comes huge and thick; chops ditto. Salad and green beans are tasty dishes, too, and are usually served as an appetizer course.

Dinner for two with chilled (!) red wine adds up to about \$25 or so. The prices are listed on the check, but so illegibly that all you can make out is the total, but it's fair enough for what you get. Lunch 12-2 Mon-Fri, dinner 5-10:30 Mon-Sat, Sun 2-10:30.

If you like your vittles tasty and don't mind eating them in the plainest surroundings, you might join the long list of regulars who frequent this place, obviously familiar with the menu possibilities and with each other, as evidenced by the warm greetings exchanged across the room as they enter and leave.

While all roads around Philadelphia don't necessarily lead to Rome, some of them at least get sufficiently close so you can put a little variety into your usual Italian cucina. ■ ■

CITY DINING

Because of limited space, we are obligated to confine our dining listing to those restaurants that have indicated a desire to reach the Philadelphia Magazine audience by becoming advertisers. Prices and hours subject to change.

PHILADELPHIA (Center City)

Arthur's Steak House, 1512 Walnut St. (PE-5-2590). This meaty eatery is one of the best restaurants in town and a tastefully decorated haven for beef gourmets. It also has one of the most enticing bars around; the martinis are Philly's wickedest. Some seafood and fowl specialties. L—11-3 (\$1.25-\$3.50); D—3-11, Sat 4-1 (\$3.50-\$7). Closed Sun.

Bellevue Court Lounge, rear entrance at 1418 Walnut St. Building (KI 6-1488). Tucked away on Bellevue Court at Chancellor is one of center city's liveliest bars-restaurants. Ultraviolet lighting enhances the curved beauties of the oval bar; a mural of ancient Rome sets off the fine Italian-American cuisine. L—11-3:30; D—5-10; S—10-2. Cocktail hour 4 to 6. Closed Sun.

Bookbinders, Old Original, 125 Walnut St. (WA 5-7027). This is the town's most famous restaurant, it has an international reputation, and with good reason. The specialty is seafood, including lobsters you can pick out of a tank. They've been at the same address for 100 years. Banquet rooms for 25 to 200. Free parking. Weekdays 11:30-10; opens Sat at noon, Sun at 1.

Bookbinders Seafood House, 215 S. 15th St. (KI 5-1137). Crustaceans and finny creatures predominate, but steaks and chops are succulently evident. Sam Bookbinder, scion of the famed Philadelphia restaurateurs, is the host. Private banquet room and bar and parking facilities make things easier for tired businessmen. Open daily until midnight. L—11:30-4; D—4-10; Sat 11:30-1 a.m., Sun noon-10.

Frankie Bradley's, Juniper & Chancellor Sts. (KI 5-4350). Like the Phoenix, Frankie Bradley's has risen from the ashes of the fire that destroyed it several years ago and is re-established as a first-class early- or late-night spot to sink your teeth into a pot roast, lobster or roast duck. Spiffy decor includes paneling from the drawing room of the old Strawbridge estate. L—11:30-4:30 (\$2.65-\$6.25); D—4:30-10:30 (\$3.85-\$6.95); S—10:30-2 a.m.

Brandt's Wharf, Pier 37 North, foot of Poplar St. (MA 7-1700). The old Philadelphia 1700 has changed hands, and surely it's got to be for the better. The dining room overlooks the harbor, and on Saturday nights a 17-piece band plays for dancing. Colonial shops for browsing and Boot and Binnacle Tavern for boozing. L—Mon-Fri 11:30-3; D—Mon-Thurs 5-10, Fri & Sat 5-12, Sun 1-9. Special prices for children.

Creperie, 1823 Sansom St. (LO 4-1100). The country French atmosphere gets you in the mood for your choice from a menu listing 40 different types of crepes, both main course and dessert. Try Crepe Michel, with a filling of caviar, sour cream, onion and egg, or Crepe Nadine, strawberries in a Grand Marnier sauce and whipped cream. After-theatre is an especially good time to go. Cocktails, wine and cider. Open 11:30-2 a.m. Reasonable prices. Closed Sun.

Da Vinci, 2007 Walnut (LO 3-6961). It's cozy and Camp with marble-top tables, candles, statues, artificial grapes hanging from trellises, sort of like one of those romantic Italian restaurants in New York. We recommend the cannelloni or saltimbocca, but the delicious possibilities are almost endless. Open 11:30 a.m.-11 p.m., Fri & Sat until 1 a.m. (one of the few places in town that serves late dinners). A la carte: L—\$1-\$1.95; D—\$1.95-\$6.95. Closed Sun & Mon.

Freddy's Restaurant & Pizzeria, 27 S. 21st St. (LO 7-9595). You don't have to dress up to get first-rate Italian food if you go to Freddy's. The tables are packed together for that amiable feeling and red tones dominate the room. Try the veal Parmigiana or lasagna, and bring your own wine. L—11:30-