

The Courier-News

Taormina gives a genuine taste of Italy

By MILLICENT K. BRODY
Correspondent

Busy sopping up the angel hair pasta with rock shrimp, scallops, Gaeta olives and capers with a touch of tomato and tossed with garlic and oil (\$12.95), two friends enjoyed dining windowside at this tastefully decorated restaurant.

Tapping on the pane of glass, a passerby mouthed, "What are you eating?"

Lifting the plate, one of the friends shared the sight of the scant remnants with the stranger.

"Was it good?" the smiling woman asked.

"Delicious," replied the diner as she continued to soak up the last morsels of garlic and oil with a bit of crusty bread.

Taormina Ristorante Italiana is owned by Chef Sal and his wife Donna Taormina who are celebrating 16 months at their Kenilworth location. Crediting his customers and friends for insisting he open a restaurant in Kenilworth, the former owner of La Stalla in Roselle, spends most of his waking hours in his kitchen.

With three years of training at the Culinary Institute in Sicily, he honed his skills working in restaurants throughout Manhattan and northern New Jersey before venturing into his own business.

"I opened a total of six restaurants," he said. "Four for other people and two of my own. My customers come from Union, Essex, Middlesex, Somerset counties and even Brooklyn. They are comfortable here, for if they have a special request, and I have the ingredients, I will make them whatever they want."

"Sal goes out of his way to make us something different," said

BUSINESS PROFILE

What: Taormina Ristorante Italiana
Where: 482 Kenilworth Blvd., Kenilworth
Hours: Closed Monday, lunch noon to 3 p.m.; dinner 5 to 10 p.m. Tuesday to Friday; 5 to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 4 to 9 p.m. Sunday.
Phone: (908) 497-1718
Of note: BYOB; proper casual attire; major credit cards accepted; handicapped-accessible; reservations suggested for Friday and Saturday nights.

Maggy Collins, who joined her daughter, Jennifer, for dinner at Taormina. "He will always accommodate you with his authentic Italian food."

"People look forward to ordering from the 'special' menu," the chef-owner continued. "We feature rack of lamb, gnocchi, beautiful ravioli and only the freshest fish. We are open six days a week. I eat here six days a week. For me, the food has to be the best!"

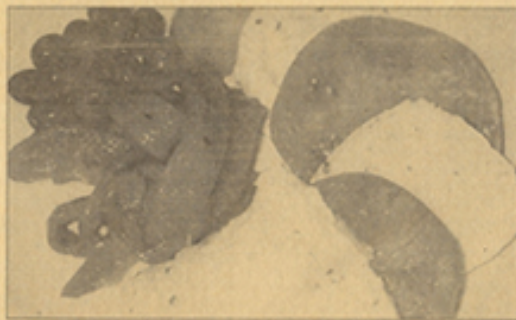
A focal point of the tastefully-decorated dining room is the brick "forno a legna," or wood-burning oven. Continuously in operation during cold winter months, the oven lends a special taste so that guests look forward to enjoying the rich flavors of focaccia breads, special appetizers, fish dishes and even roast pig.

"People really love to eat here," says server Pasquale Diorio. "The ambiance is unique and the food is very special. Enjoy the setting, for it looks like a typical Italian trattoria."



MILLICENT K. BRODY PHOTO

Sal Taormina, above, is owner and chef of Taormina Ristorante, a new dining destination in Kenilworth that provides authentic Italian food in Kenilworth; below, one of Taormina's dishes that combines tomatoes, cheeses and peppers.



TAORMINA RISTORANTE

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