

dish

Peperonata Pasta

From Argentina with Love

Just a few minutes with Marina and Adrian Fochi – co-owners of **Peperonata Pasta** – and the dedication and love with which they create their fresh, homemade pasta comes crystal clear.

“Pasta-making is in the family. You have to see my mother cooking,” said Marina with a smile. Well, the talent has certainly gone from mother to daughter. Watching Marina make pizza, pasta and many other delicious Italian and Argentine specialties to sell at the downtown Sarasota Farmer’s Market on Saturday mornings is like watching an artist at work. And, her daughter, who just graduated Kaiser University with a degree in culinary arts, is ready to follow in her footsteps.

Not to mention Adrian – who left a career as a computer engineer to start this family business in America. “Now I am a pasta engineer,” he joked. In fact, the company is named after one of Marina’s grandmother’s favorite dishes to prepare. “The main ingredients for peperonata are green and red bell peppers and onions, cooked in a casserole dish,” said Marina.

Both Adrian and Marina’s families have been in the fresh pasta business for generations. They are Italian immigrants to Argentina, which is not unusual. Marina explained that most Argentineans are of European descent – about 95 percent. “Argentina is a beautiful place and it is home to many Italians – about 60 of the population,” she said. “We take the best traditions from all of those places,” she added.

The couple came to America more than 10 years ago and settled in the Washington D.C. area. There, they started a restaurant and a fresh pasta business. Then, a few years ago, Adrian visited a relative here and “fell in love with Sarasota.”

“The people were friendly and there was more of a small-town atmosphere,” said Adrian. They also felt it was a good place to raise their two children. “We needed to slow down,” he added.

While they may have slowed down, the Fochis are still very busy. In their immaculate, white factory on Ashton Road they create more than 27 different pasta shapes, more than 16 pasta flavors, and more than 16 ravioli fillings. Baked goods are also prepared including calzones, pizza crusts and a variety of empanadas. One new item is “ready to bake” deep-dish lasagna – perfect for parties and events.

Plus, the couple does a wholesale business to restaurants up and down the Gulf coast from Cassariano Italian Eatery in Venice and to the Waterfront Restaurant on Anna Maria Island.

Pasta Crusade

The Fochis are really crusaders for healthy, fresh, locally grown food. And that definitely includes pasta. “Pasta is healthy. It isn’t taboo,” Marina said emphatically. “This pasta is all fresh and has local ingredients. In fact, we get a lot of our ingredients from Worden Farm; right there at the farmer’s market including fresh mushrooms, eggplant, arugula and basil.

“This pasta is good for you. It has no preservatives, no MSG, no hydrogenated oils and no chemicals, added Adrian.

Both are purists when it comes to pasta. To prepare Peperonata pasta less is more. Any one of their prepared sauces would be good for the plain pasta, but for the ravioli, “just a little olive oil, maybe some garlic– you want to taste the special flavor,” said Marina.

“When you think pasta, you must think out of the box,” quipped Adrian.

