

## Palumbo's Italian Market draws on owners' authentic experience, creativity

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Written by Larry Fugate, Newark Advocate



When time is tight and local families want to eat healthy without the fuss of cooking, many are heading down River Road to Palumbo's Italian Market in Granville.

"We felt there was an opportunity in town with the large college population and the number of two-income families with children," owner Paul Palumbo says of the decision to open the gourmet authentic market in December 2012. "We felt there was an opportunity catering to people who are looking for a good, healthy meal but who do not have the time for a formal restaurant or cook for themselves."

Paul hails from an authentic Italian region – South Philly, as he calls it. He worked at his family's restaurant there until he was 20 as lead cook and "just about every other position I could legally hold in the business."

His wife and the business chef, Cindy, had previous food service experience, and Paul credits her with bringing the creative touch to Palumbo's. "She gets ideas in the middle of the night and does a lot of research on the Internet," he says.

Cindy spends 12 hours a day – from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday – in the market. Paul comes in during the evenings after his day job and on weekends. The Palumbos first try new dishes themselves and then offer new items during wine tastings, dinners or as specials to see how they are received.

"Our favorite nights are the bi-monthly wine-and-dinner tastings," Cindy says. "We get creative in the kitchen, invite our friends and best customers and it is truly a party experience."

An important form of advertising relies on the "Mmmm, good!" reaction of customers. "The Lasagna Bolognese and Meatballs are traditionally our best seller, followed closely by Chicken Florentine and Italian Wedding Soup, which sell out daily when they are available," Paul says. "We didn't expect the deli sandwiches to take off the way they did, but they are priced great and a favorite of the Denison crowd."

Palumbo's offers a dinner made for two – one main entrée, a sizeable side, a robust salad and dessert – for \$19.99. There also is an array of wines, deli meats, cheeses and even roasted nuts.

"What is really great about this business is people love to eat and they love good food," Cindy says. "They come in our market and are delighted by the variety of smells and food we have to offer. Our customers are happy and we enjoy what we are doing."

The work involved in the market is not confined to the kitchen and store. In fact, much of what ends up at the market has its origins in far-flung places in the country and the globe.

"Our inspiration comes from Italian neighborhoods in New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Pittsburgh," Paul says. "We have traveled to Paris in France and Rome, Venice and Tuscany in Italy numerous times and learn first-hand about the foods and wine of Europe. Tuscany is absolutely our favorite destination. We've spent over two weeks there taking cooking lessons and touring wineries through the Tuscany and Chianti regions."

The Palumbos met through work and have lived in Licking County for a decade. When they decided to take their love for good food and wine to the business level, they "kept coming back to Granville" as their preferred location, Cindy says. "The site we chose is on the edge of town but close enough to draw the students, it's convenient (to get) to Route 16 and had parking," she says.

While the location is on the edge of Granville, it seems the quality of the food, the luring Italian scents and the friendliness of the owners brings a returning crowd and newcomers. The pair adopted the slogan "Gourmet Meals to Go" to capture the essence of their business with the mission to help families eat well.

The Palumbos relish using their business as a venue to say thanks to their customers.

“Community reaction has been great, especially with those who have traveled or been transplanted from major cities, the East Coast and Denison students,” Cindy says. “We have customers traveling from about a 10-mile radius, and that’s not bad considering our advertising has been very local and primarily word of mouth.”