

Garlic knots, pizza star on Luna's menu
January, 1995
Written by Barbara Bell Matuszewski

A lot can change in three years, especially in a restaurant. In the fall of 1991, when Luna was fairly new to the downtown Stuart scene, husband Fran and I are an enjoyable dinner there, sampling baked clams and zucchini sticks as appetizers, dinner salads, garlic knots, veal rollantine, and a sampler of pastas.

We wondered if the food had continued to be good, and if lunches were as satisfying as dinners. So, recently, around noon, we checked the fare at Luna.

The menu told us we were going to have difficulty choosing because so many different Italian dishes are offered. Midday specialties, for example, include five entrees (\$5.45) – baked ziti, lasagna, stuffed shells, and chicken cutlet or eggplant parmigiana with ziti, each with salad and four knots – and five special subs (\$3.95) – meatball, chicken, sausage, or eggplant parmigiana, and sausage and peppers. Cold subs (\$3.50 to \$4.95) are prepared as well.

Also seven appealing salads (\$2.95 to \$7.95) are listed, including rotini with broccoli, spinach, chef's, tomato with mozzarella, and in two sizes each with antipasto, Italian and garden.

Ziti or Spagetti (\$5.45 to \$5.95) is available with 10 sauces, Stromboli rolls (\$3.25 to \$3.95) are baked with eight fillings: salami, spinach, broccoli, eggplant, chicken Marsala, sausage parmigiana, meatballs and sausage and peppers. And calzones (\$3.25 to \$4.50) are stuffed with ricotta and mozzarella, plus, up to four toppings.

Pizza (\$6.50 to \$14.95 whole, \$1.35 to \$2.85 per slice), however, occupies more space than anything else on the menu and, judging by others we saw being served and taken out, may well be the most popular lunch-menu item at Luna. You can select regular thin-crust versions, or square Sicilian. At least 15 toppings are offered. In addition, specialties include the house combo, low-fat made with part-skim milk mozzarella, two vegetable types, and white (no marinara).

Fran drank a bottle of beer (\$1.90) and I had iced tea (\$1). We started our sampling spree with a very nice small antipasto (\$4.95), comprising iceberg lettuce, tomato wedges, salami, pepperoni, provolone, ripe olives, pickled vegetables, and hot and sweet peppers with excellent vinaigrette. As an accompaniment or first course, the portion is plenty for three or four; as a meal, it serves one generously.

We also chose chicken parmigiana on a good Italian sub roll (\$3.95) with marinara and lots of cheese. This is a nicely seasoned, substantial sandwich that is well prepared and certainly satisfying. We also ordered a lunch special (\$5.45), lasagna with four garlic knots and a small, commonplace green salad with excellent

dressing. The generous, delicious-tasting portion of lasagna was piled high with cheese filling and good sauce.

Not that we were still hungry, but we could not complete this review without evaluating Luna's pizza. We chose a small (14-inch) pie with mushrooms and pepperoni (\$8.50). The crust was wonderful. The sauce was excellent. And, best of all, the mushrooms were fresh and actually covered the top. In all, it was the way pizza should be – crisp bottom; gooey, tasty, tomato-y, cheesy top – worthy of violating a diet for.

Luna's garlic knots are addictive little twists of fresh, hot yeast bread coated with olive oil, garlic, and grated Romano cheese. If they do not come with your order (such as a sandwich), you can sample them (15 cents a piece) or take home a dozen (\$1.80). They, too, are definitely worth abandoning calorie-counting for a day.

Luna is a rather plain restaurant in which the emphasis is on the hearty, flavorful food. Perhaps the most outstanding products are those dishes based on yeast dough – garlic knots, pizza, calzones, strombolis. Even so, the pasta and marinara are good, too. The owners say on the menu that they use only natural ingredients and never add preservatives or artificial flavorings or colorings. Indeed the food tastes and looks fresh.

For our menu-tasting feast, we spent \$25.75, plus \$1.55 sales tax and \$4 tip, totaling \$31.30. We rate Luna:

Food: Delicious

Service: Very good.

Prices: Very good.

Value: Very good.

Atmosphere: Busy, and no wonder.

Overall: Well prepared. Italian fare that will lure you to this restaurant again and again.

Hours: Monday through Saturday 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Dress: Casual, business, whatever.

Alcoholic beverages: Beer and wine.

Smoking: Permitted at sidewalk tables only.

Wheelchair access: Satisfactory.

Credit cards: Not accepted.

Takeouts: Full menu available from Flagler Avenue window.

Free-lance writer Barbara Bell Matuszewski dines anonymously at the expenses of The News.