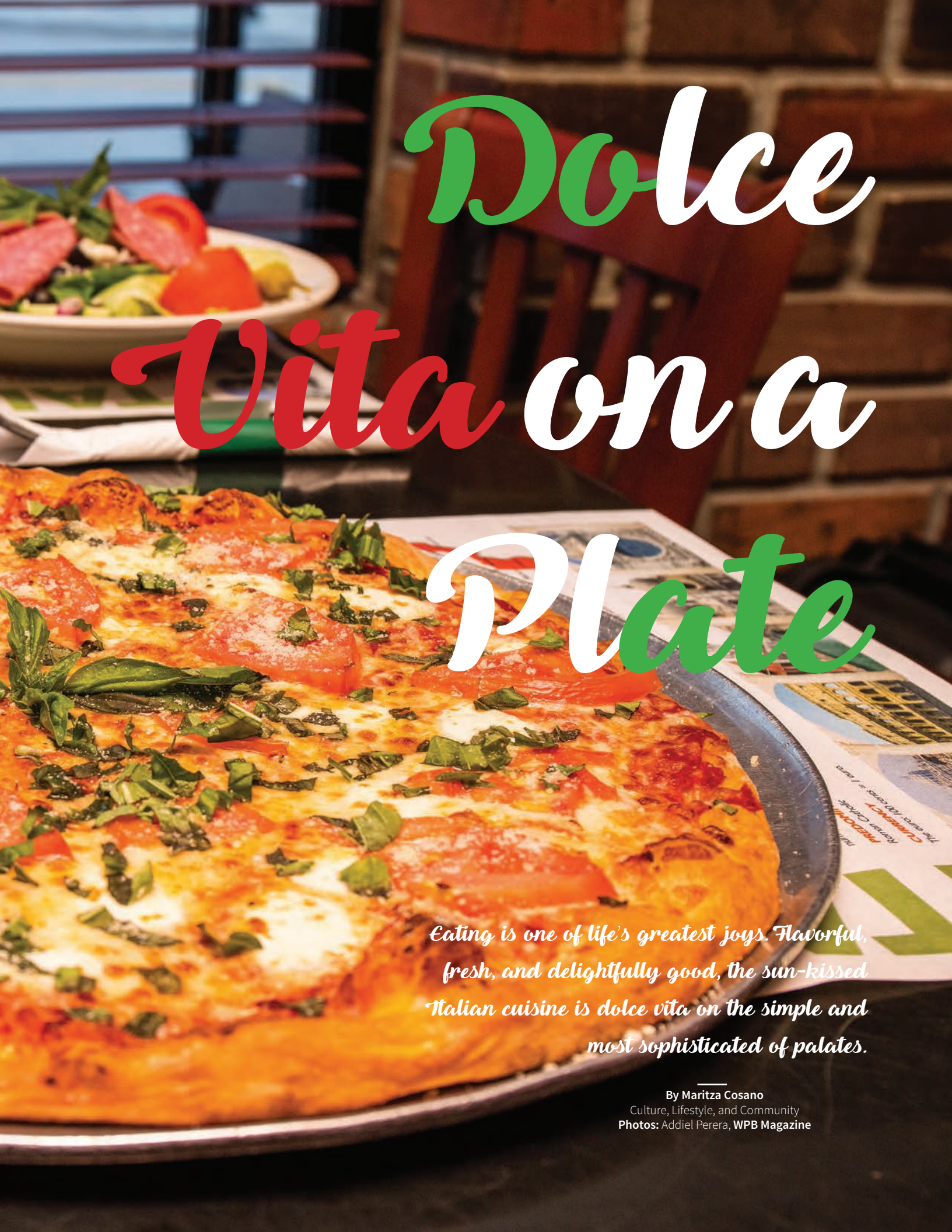






Dolce Vita on a Plate

Eating is one of life's greatest joys. Flavorful, fresh, and delightfully good, the sun-kissed Italian cuisine is dolce vita on the simple and most sophisticated of palates.

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Culture, Lifestyle, and Community
Photos: Addiel Perera, WPB Magazine



CITY PIZZA
ITALIAN CUISINE
CITYPLACE

Finding the best Italian food in a town with such fabulous gastronomies, the best advice would be to skip restaurants that serve “creative” renditions of the real thing and stick to those that offer the time-honored classics without the extra fun fare.

For instance, take City Pizza on 632 Hibiscus Street located in the heart of CityPlace. Their dishes are made with fresh, unpretentious ingredients, yet they taste like something you’d get in an upscale restaurant. To try to determine which of City Pizza foods are the “best” is like trying to prove which of the two islands of Sicily and Sardinia, which lie off the Western Coast of the mainland, serve better pizza and pasta—it’s strictly a matter of tastes as everyone has their own opinion.

Just before Hurricane Irma hit our Florida shores, I took a walk around CityPlace and found myself on the front steps of City Pizza, a picturesque hot spot that accommodates about 300 people. The staff was friendly and so were some of their frequent locals, who didn’t hold back expressing themselves as it became apparent that I was there to review the restaurant. An elegant, middle-aged woman who was dressed in her best Friday night attire with European flair, came over to my table and quickly struck up a conversation.

“I come here three, sometimes four times a week,” said the woman named Anna. She sat next to me unannounced, like an old friend who doesn’t need the formality of an invitation of sorts. “This place is fabulous,” she declared as she tapped her red polished fingernails on my table as a way to proclaim the establishment as her second home.

“The food is excellent, the management is excellent, and it just reminds me so much of Europe,” Anna said as she revealed that she was from Sweden. When asked what her favorite food here was, she extended her arms as if to say, “I love it all!” But then expressed her love for pizza and spaghetti with meatballs as her favorite dishes.



As I listened to her, I took quick glances at the menu and spotted the page with the three columns: Create Your Own Pizza, City Pizza's Famous Gourmet Pizza, and City Pizza Creations. But tonight, I was in the mood for pasta. I found there were many fantastic Italian traditional dishes on the menu, but perhaps no other summed up the very essence of Italian cooking better than Homemade Lasagna [or Lasagne in Italian], one of the most delicious baked dishes Italy has to offer, and one of the world's oldest pasta recipes, and most common comfort food made by alternating layers of pasta sheets, meat, sauce, and cheese.

City Pizza's lasagna consists of three layers of tender pasta with creamy Ricotta Cheese, ground beef, Romano Cheese, zesty tomato sauce, and topped off with melted Mozzarella Cheese.

As an avid Italian foodie, I couldn't resist the temptation of ordering Fried Calamari, one of the restaurant's many favored appetizers. As I waited for my before dinner salad to arrive, I looked around. Everything about this place reminded me of Italy. The bistro style wooden tables and chairs arranged in groups of four or more. The amber lights from the overhead lamps, the red and green that was accentuated in the decor, and even the table placemats—a paper map of Italy with brief descriptions of the country, which is found in Southern Europe well into the Mediterranean Sea.

The pungent smell of minced garlic overlaid with tomatoes, oregano, basil and white wine drifting from the kitchen filled my head and transported me to another place. I've never visited the country that's shaped like a boot. But I've read that visitors from all over the world enjoy visiting Italy for its blend of the past and present. And perhaps that's also the attraction of City Pizza.

My house salad arrived and Anna gently excused herself, going back to her table and her date, a fine looking older gentleman also appropriately and stylishly dressed for the occasion.

Both the salad and the fried calamari were delicious, but I left plenty of room for the main course. Once the lasagna was served, I immediately asked for the last ingredient. It's no secret that Italy is known as the worldwide capital of cheese—most especially Parmesan cheese, the quintessential pasta topper. As a cheese lover, I made sure my server sprinkled a generous amount over my hot dish.

It is an Italian custom to complement a meal with good wine. The Italians produce and export more wine than any other country, and their wines are often rated as some of the world's finest. As for my lasagna dinner, because nothing else goes better with cheese than red wine, I ordered the house brand, a mild red wine that tasted like the grapes had been grown on the "land of wine," that sun-soaked peninsula called Italy.

Everything good comes to an end, no doubt, but not without dessert. I ordered the White Russian cake that tasted like a huge burst of liquor had been added to this incredibly soft indulgence. *Delizioso!*

City Pizza isn't just defined by its Italian cuisine, although of course that's the main attraction, for good reason. It's good! Whether you order the bruschetta, baked ziti, side of meatballs or Tiramisu, it's really the people and that cool European ambience that add the dolce vita on the plate, allowing you to step closer to the rustic beauty of Italy—right here in our own CityPlace.





City Pizza and Italian Cuisine is open seven days a week, from 11a.m. 'til late. The restaurant offers dining, take out, delivery and catering. Planning to visit? Check their website for special offers @ citypizzawpb.com



Inspiration

The 12 Most Popular Thanksgiving Side Dishes, Ranked

Brussels sprouts, sweet potato casserole, stuffing... these are the components that truly turn this meal into a holiday.

1. Mashed Potatoes.
2. Stuffing.
3. Macaroni and Cheese.
4. Rolls.
5. Cranberry Sauce.
6. Brussels Sprouts.
7. Green Bean Casserole.
8. Sweet Potato Casserole.
9. Creamed Corn.
10. Creamed Spinach.
11. Candied Yams.
12. Glazed Carrots.



Inspiration

Make a different dessert for this Christmas Eve dinner: Yule log or Bûche

This is sure to be what you will eat for dessert if you're invited to a French celebration. And it's easy to bake too! If you want to try your hand at it, the recipe is here:

Preparation time : 30 minutes

Cooking time : 10 minutes

Ingredients (for 8 people):

For the cake :

- 1 Tsp of vanilla extract
- 3/4 cups of sugar
- 800 ml flour
- 4 eggs
- 1/2 juice of a lemon
- 1/2 tsp of baking powder

For the butter Cream:

- 250 ml butter
- 230 gr powdered sugar
- 2 whole eggs + 1 yolk and eventually a little bit of the white
- 2 bars of chocolate in a plate of 1/2 cup of chocolate milk
- a little instant coffee
- 2 1/2 tbsp of marc of Burgundy

Cake: Beat the sugar and the egg yolks until light, then add 1/2 (2 tbsp) of the lemon juice and 1 tbsp of water.

Add in the baking powder, a little salt, the vanilla, the flour and the egg white, which has been beaten until stiff.

Put on parchment paper.

Bake in a preheated oven (400°F) for 10 min. Cook in the upper part of the oven.

Cream: Cream butter and sugar until fluffy, add the eggs one at a time while beating between each.

Incorporate the melted chocolate with the coffee and the marc of Burgundy. Put the cream on the cake and roll. Decorate the log.



Inspiration



Standby combinations for the holiday season

Make Rillettes of fresh and smoked salmon that can be tarted up in all sorts of ways or simply slathered on hot thin toast or crusty Italian bread. It's important to serve the rillettes at room temperature. The texture of this pâté should be coarse and slightly stringy.



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