

dish

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY
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PACIARINO | 88 FORE STREET | PORTLAND | 207.774.3500
OPEN FOR LUNCH AND DINNER. RESERVATIONS RECOMMENDED.

Just Like Nonna's

Food serves as a rallying point for Italians, and there's no better place to experience this than at Paciarino.

Enrico Barbiero owned two restaurants in Milan, where he'd work until 3 a.m. before heading home to his wife, Fabiana DeSavino, and their daughter Berenice. The family thought about escaping the congested city for rural Tuscany or coastal Liguria until, in the fall of 2007, after seeing a documentary on TV, they rented a place on Munjoy Hill in Portland. A few months later, they moved to Cumberland and opened Paciarino, an Italian restaurant in Portland's Old Port.

"We have completely changed our life," Fabiana says. "Our decision was not to come here just to work. We want to know the way in which you're living. We really like Maine, and we want to have this kind of relationship, because it's not just working. It's not just like, 'This is our pasta.'"

Carrots, onions, sage, and extra virgin olive oil simmer in a stock pot in the restaurant's open kitchen on Fore Street. Fresh lasagna boils in water. Fabiano tastes eggplant filling, takes a phone call, and starts to prep for lunch. The meat grinder whirs as Enrico grinds pork for Bolognese sauce, one of the couple's many fresh takes on old family dishes that they make by hand each morning.

"What we know is that the hands have memory," Fabiana says. "Touching it, being there, you can really know it is the right texture of the pasta. Otherwise you cannot really know that."

At noon, the dining room teems with conversation—English sprinkled with Italian. Paciarino, slang for those special, grandmotherly meals served on Sundays, lives up to its name, serving *lasagne*, *tagliatelle*, and *maccheroni* doused with *arrabiata*, filled with fish and pumpkin, and seemingly heaped with maternal love.

Some aspects of living in Maine haven't come easily. When it came time to pay the heating bill, Fabiana says they got lost (in Milan, it's done at the post office). They've still haven't found seasonal produce (they're hoping to get the first of the season's basil, tomatoes, and produce from local farmers). And they're still waiting for a wine license (Maine law prohibits them, as wine retailers, from serving anything but a once-a-month tasting) for when they open for dinner in May. As the restaurant evolves, the couple is adapting, too—to the people and pace of life in Portland.

"We will close the kitchen at nine as everybody does in the Old Port," Fabiana says. "If it were up to us, it wouldn't. We are thinking about our dinner at nine o'clock. You close the kitchen then. But everything is pretty new for us."

Everything except serving traditional Italian food—fresh, egg-based pastas, seasonal sauces, and tiramisu—in a warm, welcoming restaurant. ★



Fabiana DeSavino's Tiramisu

8 OZ. MASCARPONE CHEESE
2 EGGS
2 TBS. SUGAR (TO TASTE)
COCOA POWDER
LADYFINGERS
COFFEE

Place the eggs and sugar in a medium mixing bowl. Use an electric mixer to whisk for one minute or until sugar dissolves. Add the mascarpone and whisk again till you have a cream. Quickly dip each ladyfinger in the coffee, cover the ladyfinger with the mascarpone cream, place in a loaf pan, and do a "second floor" in the same way you have done the first. To finish, dust some cocoa powder on the top.

Serves two. ★