

I pull into a spot almost directly in front of the restaurant, even though I know that my sister-in-law, Debra, is probably only a car-length behind me, looking for a place to park. I'm aware that I passed another spot a few feet back, and she can have that one. I'm just maybe, um, a little bit bitter? She's headed to the Bahamas this week and I'm heading nowhere but to my home gym for mid-summer workout boot camp. How unfair is that? I'm anticipating that she's going to eat Italian food aplenty with me tonight and she's also going on vacation? What's that all about?

I walk inside the restaurant and am greeted warmly by the owner, Joe. It's only a moment before Deb comes in, turns to me and asks why I couldn't take the first parking space I saw.

"Because you're going on vacation," I say matter-of-factly.

Vincent's Pizzeria & Restaurant has held a strong presence on Atlantic Ave. in Lynbrook since 1962, when they were initially located across the street from where they now are. Six years ago, the interior of this restaurant was fully renovated, and its modern motif makes for an enjoyable and refreshing atmosphere, comfortably seating up to 60. The walls are a lovely Venetian style, with occasional sconces and snippets of stylish brick deliberately peeking through their cream and gold colors. The tables' marble-like tops are similarly hued like the walls, and at each are black, almost faux wrought-iron backed chairs with cream color seats. Above us are high-hat lights interspersed throughout the dining area illuminating it tastefully, and opposite us, a long wall with huge dark-framed square windows above a lengthy beige bench seat that extends almost 1/2 the length of the total room. I notice that each windowsill has an adorable vase with flowers. Details like these are always striking to me.

This is a more upscale and elegant atmosphere for a pizzeria/restaurant, despite that you can order something as simple as a slice. From the menu that I'm skimming over, it's evident that it's really suitably family-oriented here, with something for everyone to eat.

No more than 5 minutes have we been seated here and nibbling on garlic toasts with fresh Bruschetta, when Joe sits and joins us, telling us about the variety of dishes he's preparing to serve us this evening. As we chit-chat, a man and woman waiting nearby for a table, spot Joe and head right to us. Three minutes into speaking with them now, I've learned that they are, a) self-described as some of Vincent's most loyal customers, and, b) covet the back, left-hand table. Sandra and David are extremely lively and friendly, and Deb and I notice that David is wearing a t-shirt that reads, "I stained this shirt at Vincent's."

I ask Joe if I may have one, but he tells me that he doesn't have any.

"May I buy one then?" I ask.

"We don't make them. He had that shirt made," he says. "He has one that reads something else about us too."

Now, that is devotion. I don't even own a single piece of garb that reads *Local Luxuries* on

T D G

Two Girls Dining

Vincent's Pizzeria & Restaurant

By Jacqueline Bergrin

it – and I'm the Publisher. This guy has shirts made about Vincent's stains.

Sandra smiles at me and asks if I've ever eaten here before. I tell her that I haven't, but Deb orders from here quite often.

"Well, it's like being at home without having to cook or clean up."

I love her enthusiasm. Her smile is as genuine as is her obvious delight in evidently not having to cook too often. OMG I envy her. Eight of ten times if I return home well after "dinner time" (which in my house, is generally 8pm or better), there's a hungry husband and two children awaiting me with wide-open, pleading looks to be fed. I could be on the floor of my living room, face-down and gasping for air and I'd likely go unnoticed, with them possibly even stepping over me. Leave them without a meal? Suddenly, Mom's not home.

When we're alone, Deb and I each try the Salad Alla Nicole, which is a combination of mesclun salad, cranberries, walnuts and gorgonzola cheese tossed with a raspberry vinaigrette dressing. I love a salad that's light, yet has a little "something something" that gives it a kick. We follow it up with Baked Clams that are pretty substantial both in the size of the clams and the filling nestled in them, and we agree that it's a perfect start to our meal.

Tonight's specials, recited by Amanda, a very pretty girl with a dark side-swept ponytail and dark-black rimmed glasses, all sound very tempting. An appetizer of Portobello Mushroom, stuffed with ground sausage, spinach and sundried tomato. Chicken Principessa, 2 breasts of chicken topped with tomato, asparagus and melted provolone in a white wine sauce served with pasta. Fresh fish, including Tripe in a marinara sauce with pasta, or Swordfish, served grilled, oreganata, blackened or fra diavolo style, accompanied by pasta or a vegetable.

I'm glad that our menu has been arranged for. I would never be able to choose what to have. As it is, my head is reeling after what was a long day at the beach today, where I roasted like the potato in my dish. I have a small chill and pull a sweater over my sunburned shoulders.

Amanda serves us each a plate of Chicken Campagniola, which Vincent's boasts as its signature dish. It has chunks of chicken sautéed with oven-roasted potatoes, onion, sausage and red pepper. This really is quite different, because it has a homemade type flair that I imagine even I could make if I only had the time to. Oven-roasted to me, suggests the need to be around long enough for the stove to warm up and stay heated for a lengthy amount of time.

The more that Deb mentions her upcoming trip, the more tempted I am, (and conflicted, as it would be one less piece for me), to pick a chunk of sausage out of my plate and fling it at her. I consider whether I can secretly squeeze at least two irons into her luggage to weigh down all the bikinis and summer dresses she'll likely pack. That should put her baggage over the weight-limit and make me feel a lot better.

Though I'm sort of on the "lighter side" these days, if I were traveling soon, I might be over the weight limit because I imagine that I will be returning to Vincent's in the very near future for the Veal Marsala we now share. It is really *divine*; there are *many, many* mushrooms atop the thin cutlets and the sauce is phenomenal. We also split what would normally be a serving of Penne Alla Vincent, each of our plates plentiful with ground sausage, spinach and sundried tomatoes, sautéed in a garlic and oil sauce. Really nice dishes that complement one another.

We conclude our main meals with what I had specifically requested earlier – Eggplant Parmigiana, which now served, is intimidating with its abundant amount of bubbling mozzarella and rich tomato sauce. I'm an enormous lover of eggplant, so though I'm not a professional food critic, nor will ever proclaim to be one, I think I qualify as experienced and discerning enough to vouch for dishes made with this vegetable – and this is phenomenal. Also, because it is vegetable-based with its eggplant and tomatoes, there must be ample vitamins – so I assuage my caloric fears by thinking about how this dish must have deep nutritional value.

As we eat our dessert, I ask Deb,

"Did you know that the singular form of cannoli is cannolo, and not cannolus, like you might think it would be? Cannoli are said to have originated in Italy, but I think I read somewhere that they were named from the Latin word, canna?"

"Are you kidding me?" she asks while licking cream from her lips.

"No. I'm fairly sure of this," I say.

"Jacqui, I wasn't asking if you were kidding about the etymology of cannoli. I meant is that what you're really thinking about while we're eating them?"

I guess I am. Maybe I'm trying to distract myself from all the other things on my mind, like her trip, for example, or my wondering about the little *Alice in Wonderland* door I've noticed across from the pizza counter. It's definitely way too short to be made to walk through – even for me, and I'm really vertically challenged.

As we exit Vincent's doors, it occurs to me that this is the last time I'll see Deb before she flies away to a Bahamian paradise.

"Have a wonderful time!" I say enthusiastically.

I honestly am wishing her a great time – but I can't help but also smile because I know that we equally over-ate tonight – and she'll be the one real soon that will be wearing bikinis for almost a full week.

Some Other Notable Menu Items You Might Try

Appetizers Like Fresh Mozzarella & Tomato Sliced tomato, fresh mozzarella, roasted pepper w/balsamic dressing, \$6.25, Hot Antipasto Baked clams, shrimp oreganata, eggplant rollatini & stuffed mushrooms, \$11.50, Soups, As in New England Clam Chowder, \$4.00 Salads, Such As Antipasto, Crisp lettuce, tomato, cucumber, pimento, beets, salami, provolone, anchovies & pepperoncini \$8.75, Heros, Including Grilled Chicken w/Broccoli Rabe, \$8.50, Veal & Peppers or Mushrooms, \$7.00, Pastas, Including Pasta Escarole & Beans Fresh escarole & cannelloni beans sautéed in garlic & oil, w/a touch of tomato sauce, \$11.95, Dishes, Served w/choice of pasta including Ravioli, Chicken Piccata Sautéed w/ fresh garlic, lemon, wine & capers, \$13.50, Veal Bruschetta Fried cutlets topped w/ chopped tomato, onion & fresh basil, \$14.50, Seafood Platter Calamari, scungilli, clams, mussels & jumbo shrimp sautéed in a marinara sauce (sweet, medium or hot), \$19.95, Baked Specialties Lasagna, \$8.50, Desserts, i.e., Tartufo, \$4.25, Cherry or Italian Cheesecake, \$4.00, All Types of Pizza & Toppings & Lunch Specials Every Day at Modest Prices.

Vincent's Pizzeria & Restaurant is located at 14 Atlantic Ave. in Lynbrook. Eat in or take out; both quickly prepared. Open 7 days, 11am-11pm & off-premises catering. Accepts all major credit cards. Gift Certificates available. For more info., call them at 516.599.1204 or visit www.vincentspizzeria.com

If you would like to see Two Girls Dining in your restaurant, please send us an email for consideration, at localluxurieseditors@localluxuries.net