

LITTLE ITALY'S FINEST

By DANIEL J. BOLLINGER • PHOTOS BY ZAZA WEISSGERBER

Top chefs are among the new breed of pizzaiolo who are fanatic over the temperature of their ovens and nearby sourcing of ingredients. They're elevating pizza from greasy pies in cardboard boxes to inspired creations with crackly, charred crusts topped with house-made cheese and charcuterie. One such place can be found on Grand Street, sandwiched between a Malaysian restaurant and the famed *Ferrara's*. Welcome to *Margherita NYC* for a truly Italian experience.

Inconspicuous as it may be with its wooden sign and simple black canopy the creations in this small cozy restaurant are straight from the motherland. Owners Giuseppe Delli Carpini and Vincenzo Scardino stay true to Italian dishes with an incredible array of classic Italian specialties. In fact most of the ingredients used are either imported from Italy or locally sourced. Those not imported are locally sourced. As an example, the smoked mozzarella is sourced from DiPalo's, located across the street, and made on-site. The veal, pork, and beef in their Bolognese sauce is all sourced from Pino's Prime Meats, another Little Italy staple. And as a matter of tradition, the basil used at the restaurant is from the garden of Giuseppe's aunt—in Sicily. Now how many Italian restaurants can boast that?



MOLTO BENE

Why not start with an antipasto? The Antipasto Misto Italiano has all the traditional prosciutto, mortadella, mozzarella, and olives that you would expect served with focaccia bread fresh from the oven. Or, if you prefer, try the Polpette di Ragu al Tegamino which will melt in your mouth. These Angus beef meatballs are served with Ragu sauce and bread. A definite winner.

Leave room for the pasta. Opt for Gnocchi di Patate made fresh daily and a choice of Sorrentina, Quattro Formaggi, Pesto or Bolognese. The Pesto is especially good with basil and fresh garlic; the Quattro Formaggi is also mouthwateringly delicious. You might also try the Fettuccini ala Bolognese, an excellent mix of veal, pork, beef and vegetables smothered in a tomato-based ragu. Just unforgettable.

There is an excellent wine selection to accompany your dinner. Also, *Margherita NYC* offers beer and ales. A traditional favorite is the Follina Chiara Follinetta, a crisp wheat beer, and quite a unique treat. Remember to ask for some of the balsamic reduction for bread dipping. And for dessert, you must indulge in the Tiramisu. On the dessert menu is a selection of Nutella desserts (yes, the Nutella is imported from Italy).



TRULY ITALIAN

If you're in the mood for only pizza, you've come to the right place. *Margherita NYC* offers a menu of a dozen different pizzas. Their dough rising process is no less than 20 hours, allowing the elimination of most of the gluten. This makes their crusts light and easy to digest. All of their pizzas are baked in their handmade traditional Neopolitan brick oven. And make note: Both red and white pizzas are on the menu. One to try is the Napoletana made with tomato sauce, fresh garlic, EVO oil, anchovies, capers, and basil. For a white version, opt for the Pizza del Tifoso of Mozzarella, Italian sweet sausage, broccoli rabe and EVO oil—tasty and satisfying.

The owners are true artisans, not just chefs. From sourcing all their ingredients from only the best and making almost everything in-house, *Margherita NYC* delivers the authentic taste of Italy. It's the real deal.

Margherita NYC is located at 197 Grand St (between Mott and Mulberry St; margheritanyc.com). •

