

Calvino's – Casual and Delicious “Foods of the World”

People in Old Orchard and Ottawa Hills think of Calvino's as their special neighborhood restaurant, and it has easily expanded its regional appeal as friends tell friends how great it is to eat there. Fred Kodeih opened this charming restaurant in Cricket West near Westgate Village Shopping Center in 1996. Dennis Osworth became a partner in the business a few years ago, and they are both chefs.

When you enter Calvino's, you immediately appreciate the murals on the walls, painted by Arminda Combs, one of the waitresses. One of the friendly waitresses greets you and escorts you up the little staircase to the second floor. There is limited seating on the first floor if you don't choose to go upstairs. Artwork by a previous waitress, Astrid Reed, graces the upstairs, which feels like a balcony overlooking the entry area.

Calvino's is a great choice for either lunch or dinner. Appetizers (\$2.75 - \$7.45) include several varieties of hearty bread – garlic, olive oil and herb, cheese, tomato basil, and, my favorite spinach and feta. Breads are available in small and large portions. Marinated mushrooms, herb fries in an olive oil and lemony herb mix, and hummus with pita bread and fresh vegetables round out the list.

Salads are all available in small and large (\$4.20 - \$7.00). My favorite is roasted vegetables with zucchini, red peppers, eggplant, and pine nuts in a lemony vinaigrette. This can be ordered with marinated grilled chicken breast for a terrific non-starchy meal. Other options are tomato mozzarella, cucumber, Greek, chicken, and Caesar salads.

Entrées (\$10.25 - \$12.95) include chicken kabobs and veggie kabobs, which are served with hummus and pita bread. One or two specials are available every day, and you can always enjoy traditional pasta dishes, served with a salad and the freshly baked garlic bread – mostaccioli, tortellini, fettuccini Alfredo, lasagna, and linguini. Chef Fred and Chef Dennis are very flexible about preparing these dishes with just the ingredients you wish.

The chefs use fresh veggies, cheese, marinated chicken, and smoked turkey, ham, and bacon in a variety of sandwich selections, all of which are available in half (\$5.70) and full size (\$7.70). Sandwiches named Venice and Borgia add to the Italian flair.

Pizzas (\$4.45 – \$11.45 plus charges for regular and premium toppings) and gourmet pizzas (\$6.75 - \$20.75) are delectable at Calvino's, and are offered in 8”, 12”, 14”, and 16”. Calvino's 12 gourmet pizza choices include Pancetta with fresh spinach, Canadian bacon, tomato, and mozzarella; The Meaty Beastly with pepperoni, smoked bacon, sausage, ham, and ground beef; White Pie with garlic, olive oil, ricotta, tomatoes, green onions, and mozzarella; and The Greek with fresh spinach, garlic, olive oil, pine nuts, feta, mozzarella, basil, and sun-dried tomatoes.

If you want to add or subtract any ingredients, Chef Dennis and Chef Fred are very accommodating. Although it's not on the menu, the wait staff and kitchen staff both

know what an “Ellen pie” is. A few years ago, I ordered The Greek without mozzarella, basil, and sun-dried tomatoes – add red peppers, please – so many times, that they began calling it Ellen pie. That’s just the welcoming atmosphere you can expect at Calvino’s.

Stromboli is one of the Aeolian Islands of Italy and a special treat at Calvino’s. A stromboli is seasoned dough rolled around the ingredients – like an inside-out pizza. They are available in three sizes - 6”, 11”, and 26” (\$4.70 - \$17.40), with the same ingredients as regular and gourmet pizzas.

A large variety of soft drinks, beer, and wine is available to enhance your meal. The beer list (\$2.50 - \$3.75) sports sixteen beers, including 8 imported from Jamaica, Mexico, Holland, Scotland, Ireland, and Canada. All wines are available by the glass (\$4.75 - \$6.25) or bottle (\$18.00 - \$24.00), with a helpful note in the wine list, “Both red & white wines are listed from light bodied & fruity, to more full-bodied, rich & dry in style.” Popular wines are from California, Italy, and Australia.

If you aren’t too full from the plentiful meal, cheesecake and specialty cakes are available. My friends and I often take a bit of exercise before dessert by walking around to the southeast corner of Cricket West to Cold Fusion for Toft’s ice cream.

Calvino’s is a delightful place for individuals, families, small groups, and large groups. It enjoys many repeat visitors because of the good food, good and friendly service, and nice atmosphere with the patrons who often get to see people they know. Calvino’s is also an excellent choice for your catering needs. The food and set-up make a good impression if you are providing a meal for clients, family, or friends.

Calvino’s Restaurant, Cricket West – 3143 West Central, 419-531-5100, fax 419-531-5362. Monday 10:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.; Tuesday – Friday, 10:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m., Saturday, 3:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. Parking is available in front of the restaurant.

article by D. Ellen Critchley
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