

# Little Italy Sprouts Up In Holland As Rosie's Takes On Whole New Appeal

BY C. JULIA NELSON  
PLAYLIST REPORTER

Little Italy popped up in Northwest Ohio this year.

What used to be a family pizzeria known for Hot Mama Bread and pizza buffets in Holland has expanded its menu and broadened its horizons in more ways than one.

If you have a nose for Italian, it's about time you checked out Rosie's Italian Grille, located at 606 N. McCord Rd., formerly Rosie's Fine Foods.

From fig trees to gourmet lobster ravioli, Rosie's has done a 180; it morphed into a casual but more upscale Italian paradise. If you can find time to get there while the weather's still nice, the terrace provides a feast for the senses.

Either before dinner for a cocktail, during dinner or while enjoying dessert over a musical performance, the terrace offers a quaint escape from the world. It features a tiled, cascading water fountain, vast gardens and wrought iron furniture all shaded under umbrellas and canopies.

Whether you take advantage of an appetizer like bruschetta or bungalow shrimp or a glass of Pinot Grigio, enjoy it on the terrace while the eating outside is still in season.

Originally from Taormina, Italy, owner and restaurant namesake Rosie Barone wanted to share her family's delectable recipes with the world. In 1979, she opened the first of three Rosie's Fine Foods restaurants.

Now in the hands of her three sons — Philip, John and Michael Barone — the Rosie's in Holland has become a tribute to her hometown and family. It took a year of hiatus in physical and gourmet reconstruction to do it, but the result is well worth the wait.



The European-style terrace wrapping around the exterior of the new and improved Rosie's Italian Grille features a vast array of fresh greenery and wrought iron furniture. It's a true taste of Italy in Northwest Ohio, perfect for enjoying a tall glass of Chardonnay.

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When you walk into Rosie's Italian Grille, which reopened in March, the first thing you see is a seven-foot case of fresh Zingerman's Breads, ready for consumers to purchase and take home (maybe on the way out).

Memorabilia from Taormina, from photographs to fine, hand-painted plates, lines the other walls between stone archways and arched corridors.

Hues of cream, forest green and mauve accent the floors and walls, while mood lighting at each table and subtle, classical music set the tone.

Philip said the renovation was designed as a tribute to his mother's hometown.

"We've stepped it up," Philip said. "When you go to Italy you're out on these patios all the time. It's very comfortable. We've tried to

duplicate that feeling here."

He fell in love with Italy so much so that he brought it to his customers.

"We want our customers to feel like they're dining in Sicily," Welch said.

He said the old Rosie's was more of a fast food experience. And while the new restaurant still features Rosie's favorites such as stromboli or pizza, the overall experience of dining has been recreated there.

"Here the idea is to stay awhile, make an evening of it," Philip said. "It's about more than just dinner."

General manger Lisa Welch agreed.

"It's the experience of feeling welcome," she said. "It's about having servers that truly care, who understand about our food enough to explain what's in it. It's very relaxed."

The friendly wait staff

welcomes visitors upon entering with a big smile and sees to their needs, whether carryout or dine-in, in a timely and sophisticated fashion. True Italians would have it no other way.

Once seated, if you haven't been enjoying a cocktail in the new sports bar area, the time it takes for the scent of sweet Italian food to hit your nostrils has to be record-setting. Salivation quickly sets in.

To tame the taste buds, an appetizer is in order. You could always fall back on the traditional Hot Mama Bread, but take a risk and try something new, something that sounds different, but is sure to please; chances are you won't regret it.

A popular new pizza serves as a crowd-pleasing appetizer, according to Welch.

"Everyone seems to love the Margherita pizza," Welch said.

It's a thin crust pie topped with mozzarella cheese, tomatoes and fresh basil that will have you shoveling food instead of eating. According to the detailed menu, legend has it that the dish was originally created in 1889 in honor of the Queen of Italy, hence the name.

If that's not tempting enough, have the wait staff give you a "tour" of the menu. Servers at the new Rosie's are trained to know how the dishes are prepared.

Longtime Rosie's patrons the Brown family found that the choices were overwhelming and their selections were everything they expected and better than they imagined.

"The food is incredible," Gwendolyn Brown said from

the Keys. Philip said the main focus is on Sicilian-style Florida grouper and yellowtail snapper, occasionally bringing in sea bass, scallops and swordfish.

"Basically it was swimming yesterday and we're serving it to you today," Welch said.

Beef is also a new strength for Rosie's. Welch explained that the restaurant only uses stockyard steaks and beef from Chicago.

"With this restaurant we can do more of the things we grew up with," Philip said.

It's not unusual to find one of the brothers behind the scenes working with head chef Chris Dewort.

"I still enjoy making the fresh soups," Philip said.

Among the soup selections are minestrone, lentil, lobster bisque and guespac-co.

When dinner is over, if you're not ready to head home, a nightcap is in order at the bar, which is open until 1:00 a.m. For die-hard sports fans, several TVs are scattered about the bar for viewing pleasure.

On Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights during the warm months, Rosie's brings in local bands such as Indigo Blue, the house band, and Scooby Snacks.

If you can't make it for dinner, there's always the option to have a panini or Italian wrap for lunch as the new Rosie's is open daily at 11:00 a.m. It closes at 10:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday and at 11:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. It is closed on Sundays.

Further information is available at Rosie's Web site at [rosiesitaliangrille.com](http://rosiesitaliangrille.com).

## Harrison Rally Day Slated For Saturday, September 17

The Perrysburg Area Arts Council will host Harrison Rally Day on Saturday, September 17. The event features 112 juried arts and crafts booths, 23 fine artists competing for \$1,000 in prizes, two entertainment stages, a children's art activity area and more.

The arts and crafts fair will be open from 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. At 10:00 a.m., a parade will begin at Commodore School and continue down Louisiana Avenue to Front Street.

The Perrysburg Chamber of Commerce will sponsor the Taste of Perrysburg and community and business booths. Information and first aid will be available at the gazebo at West Second Street and Louisiana Avenue.

The main stage, near Huntington Bank, will feature the following acts: On the Beach, rock/pop, 11:00 a.m.; Lucy Long and the Root Cellar Old Time String Band, 12:30 p.m.; The Sixth Edition, vocal/jazz, 1:00 p.m.; Jake & Mike, 2:30 p.m.; The Hep Cat Revival, swing, 3:00 p.m.

The youth stage, near the Commodore Perry statue, will feature local high school and college bands from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

"Busy Bee Town," located on the grassy area at Perry's Landing, will be abuzz with children's arts and sports activities, as well as guest performers throughout the day.

For more information, contact the Perrysburg Area Arts Council at (419) 873-ARTS or e-mail [perrysburgarts@aol.com](mailto:perrysburgarts@aol.com).



Philip Barone, part owner of Rosie's Italian Grille, and general manager Lisa Welch are excited to welcome patrons back after a year of renovations and updates. Spending 25 years as a pizzeria, Rosie's Fine Foods has transitioned into Rosie's Italian Grille at 606 N. McCord Rd.

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