

Dining Out

Sampling some of the borough's best meals in West Chester's premier dinner destinations. This Month: Brother's Pizza

There are those dining out nights that require a jacket, a fancy dress, and a credit card to mark an occasion. There are those dining out nights that require a decent pair of jeans, a few of your besties, and a hot see-and-be-seen spot. And then there are dining out nights that come after a long, rainy, unseasonably cool summer day full of errands, that only require a booth to slip into and some hot comfort food, well executed and prepared by someone who is not you.

That was the backdrop when my son and I paid a recent visit to Brothers Pizza and Pasta, located at Bradford Plaza. While the word "pizza" may come first in their name, we were definitely there for some pasta—and for me, specifically, some escarole soup. We slipped in early—just before 5pm, having worked our way right through a lunch break—and that turned out to be a good thing because we beat the rush.

When you first enter, Brothers appears to be your standard pizza joint: a large counter dominates the room that is staffed by several busy employees trotting back and forth, a consistently ringing phone, a few tables, and a television on the wall. Fortuitously, the Olympics were on that television during our visit, and the USA men's basketball team was kicking ass and taking names. They'd score the gold medal before we even paid the check. Listening to it and to the reactions of the employees and a couple of customers up front provided an excellent soundtrack to our meal, but I digress.

Step just beyond that front room to a quieter dining space, with booths along the wall on the left, tables on the right. The wainscoting around the whole dining room is painted a soft black, lending just a touch of sophistication without destroying the casual vibe. Above it on the "booths" side of the room is some beautiful, exposed brick (my favorite architectural element), and crisp white paint above it on the "tables" side of the room. Several bright prints in black frames and some sleek, metallic pendants complete this welcoming environment.

Can't Make Up Your Mind? You Don't Have To!

Indulge in a pasta flight, available on their seasonal menu. It features capellini served three ways: blush, pesto, and garlic & olive oil.

Our efficient, friendly server, Stella, arrived promptly and fetched our soft drinks and water, and I ordered my soup before returning my attention to the menu. Before I could even read the whole thing, however, my son piped up "Mom, they have homemade gnocchi." It had the effect that he assumed it would—I put my menu down immediately, decision made. Myles struggled a bit longer; a true pasta lover, too many options tied him in knots,

at least temporarily. Lucky for him, Brothers offers a pasta flight on their seasonal menu. That's right—just like they do with wines and beers at your favorite watering hole, Brothers has put their own delicious spin on the flight trend.

Stella delivered my soup, which arrived with several delicious slices of seeded Italian bread and butter, the way that all soup would arrive if I ran the universe. The bread alone is worth a mention, somehow both dense and light, with just a tiny crunch of a crust, deliciously fresh. I'm a big soup fan, escarole is a longtime favorite, and there are several iterations of it. Some of it is Italian-wedding-ish, with tiny meatballs or beans. Some of them have pasta, some do not. Brothers' version is along the stracciatella lines; unfussy, with just the important parts: a rich chicken broth, egg drop, and of the course the green that doesn't get enough love in my opinion, escarole. Did it feel weird eating a hot bowl of soup on an August afternoon? A little. Did it hit the spot on a chilly, dreary day? You bet it did.

Brothers also has Pasta Fagiolio soup on the menu if escarole is not your thing, as well as a soup of the day.

Next came the salads for our entrees: Brothers' house salad. Another win, this perfectly sized salad came in a small wooden bowl, and contained crisp romaine, black olives, tomatoes, colossal house-made croutons, and their own balsamic vinaigrette. The salad also contains purple onion, and I want to take a moment to give them props for calling that onion what it is. Maybe it's because purple is my favorite color, or because I'm such a literal person, but calling them red onions has never made sense to me.

Our well-timed entrees arrived, and Stella whisked away extraneous plates and saw to refilling our beverages. Myles's flight of pasta was so fun, visually and culinarily. Three small bowls on a long platter, with capellini pasta dressed in three different sauces: a beautiful blush, a bright pesto, and a tangy garlic and oil. A perfect choice for someone who will eat anything pasta but isn't in the mood to make a lot of decisions.

My gnocchi arrived; if I see it on a menu, I'm going to order it, almost without fail. This version was all homemade pasta



(some recipes use potato as well), and the tomato sauce it was dressed in burst in my mouth—just so incredibly fresh. It was delicious, and I have no shame in admitting I ate every bit of it. I also ordered two of their homemade meatballs. This turned out to be an excellent decision on my part. Hefty and hearty and unmistakably homemade, they were the perfect accompaniment to the pasta, and I recommend them unreservedly. For an English/Irish gal, I know my way around meatballs.

Another reason to consider Brothers for your next dining out experience is the fact that although we ordered some relatively standard Italian entrees, they offer much, much more. Sure, you can get mozzarella sticks here off the appetizers menu—but you can also get goat cheese toasts. Sure, you can order the house or maybe a Caesar salad here, but those are two of 15 (that's fifteen) salad offerings, including the Gorgonzola & Walnuts, or the Dolce Insalata, with arugula, spinach, apples, craisins, pears, goat cheese and pumpkin seeds. You can also add chicken, tuna, or shrimp to any salad for a small upcharge.

There are 20 house specialty entrees here, from eggplant parmigiana to spaghetti with clams to a dish called Chicken Frosinone, which I've earmarked for my next visit: chicken with fresh mushrooms and spinach in a lemon garlic white wine sauce.

Homemade Meatballs

hearty yet delicate and served in a wonderfully bright marinara sauce with freshly chopped herbs

Only want a sandwich? Plenty of options here too, from traditional hoagies and cheesesteaks to 10 different wraps and a separate gourmet sandwiches section, calzone and stromboli—truly something for everyone. And yes—of course there's a kids' menu, too.

Oh, and about that pizza: if you can't find one you like here, there's no hope for you. Traditional and gluten-free, there are 18 options of their gourmet pizza menu, running the gamut from Hawaiian to Margherita to Pesante (bacon, pepperoni, sausage, and meatballs) to vegetarian. Don't like any of those? Create your own..

You'll want to keep Brothers in mind if you just don't want to cook dinner tonight—and you definitely want to do so if you don't want to cook for a whole bunch of other people, either. Contact them for their catering menu. You—and your guests—will be very glad you did.

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On the Shelf

Some of the best cookbooks at West Chester Public Library, as reviewed by library director Maggie Stanton

The Complete Autumn & Winter Cookbook 550+ Recipes for Warming Dinners, Holiday Roasts, Seasonal Desserts, Breads, Food Gifts and More

BY THE AMERICAN TEST KITCHEN

When the weather changes, so do our food choices. Enjoy these various comforting recipes as you settle into the cooler fall days and nights.

Sunday Casseroles: Complete Comfrot in One Dish

BY BETTY ROSBOTTOM.

What is better than having a casserole in the oven while relaxing on a Sunday afternoon? Pop it into the oven, park yourself on the couch and focus on your Sunday newspaper (or the Eagles), while your house fills with delicious dinner smells. Sunday is a day of rest, as they say.

America's Test Kitchen Thanksgiving Playbook 25+ Recipes for Your Holiday Table

BY AMERICA'S TEST KITCHEN

Whether it's your first time hosting or you're an experienced Thanksgiving chef, this e-book will ensure your meal is ready to go for the most delicious dinner of the year. It includes recipes and several options for your turkey, including a two-hour turkey and gravy, sides, and desserts.

Football Party Recipes: Delicious Ideas for the Big Game

BY KATRINA JORGENSEN

Game day parties can only be complete with the right snacks for the win! With recipes from drinks to hot and cold appetizers, sandwiches, entrees, and desserts, this book will help keep your guests content—and full mouths keep the trash talk to a minimum.



New England Soup Factory Cookbook

BY MARJORIE DRUKER

This book contains 100+ of Boston's best-tasting traditional and creative soup recipes for potlucks, picnics, Super Bowl parties, and holidays. What's fall without a little New England charm? Or soup, for that matter?

Seriously Good Chili Cookbook: 177 of the Best Recipes in the World

BY BRIAN BAUMGARTNER

A chili master off-screen, this book by *The Office*'s Brian Baumgartner features 177 recipes stamped with his "seriously good" approval—everything from three-bean to mango to...alligator chili. And if you can't trust Kevin, who can you trust?

And finally those of you who may want to read a mystery now that spooky season is here, check out some of our cozy food-related mystery novels; some of them even include tasty recipes!

Catch Me If You Candy

BY ELLIE ALEXANDER

Murder at the Pumpkin Pageant

BY DARCI HANNAH

Now You See It

BY CAROL J PERRY

Pumpkin Spice Peril

BY JENN MCKINLAY

A Catered Thanksgiving

BY ISIS CRAWFORD

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