

## A Taste of Maryland Heights

### *Nino's Blends Elegance, Comfort with Italian Flair*

By Sara Berry

After several months of sampling Maryland Heights' many lunch options, I wanted to find out what the city's restaurants had to offer for a slightly less casual evening meal. Communications Administrator Paul Thompson opted to join me on this venture, and we decided to check out Nino's at Westport Plaza. Our guest reviewer this month was 16-year-old resident and Pattonville High School student B.J. Maki, and he provided a youthful perspective on this upscale locale.

We arrived for dinner on a chilly Thursday at around 6 p.m. Only a few other parties were there for an early meal, which created a quiet setting perfect for conversation. The lighting was soft, but not too dim, which accentuated the rich wood furniture and gave the room a cozy feel. The walls were decorated with a variety of interesting oil portraits painted by owner Nino Pippa, who is a full-time artist as well as a restaurateur.

Nino's menu consists primarily of simple Italian dishes with a few familiar favorites thrown in. The seasoned flatbread served as a precursor to every meal is a uniquely delicious focaccia, "baked daily on premises according to an old Italian recipe." Appetizers range from the standard (toasted ravioli and buffalo wings) to the exotic (escargot in mushroom caps and carpaccio, paper-thin slices of raw beef tenderloin with olive oil and spices). Salad offerings include the classic Caesar and an Italian salad made up of tomatoes, artichoke hearts, olives, onions, ham and mozzarella cheese. I enjoyed the house salad with Italian dressing. We also decided to share an order of fried mozzarella sticks, which were much lighter

and more delicate than most versions of this appetizer.

As his entree, resident reviewer B.J. selected fettucine alfredo with shrimp. He later said that he thoroughly enjoyed his meal and would "definitely" recommend Nino's to a friend.

Paul chose shrimp scampi, which featured a handful of large, tender shrimp lightly sautéed in butter and garlic. The shrimp came with Nino's standard sides — scalloped potatoes and steamed string beans and baby carrots — that accompany all but the pasta dishes.

I went with Nino's Veal Valdostana, which the menu describes as veal with mushrooms, artichokes and wine sauce. The veal was tender and delicious, and the wine sauce was more of a rich brown gravy that went perfectly with the meat and potatoes, giving it the feel of comfort food with an upscale touch.

For dessert, our wonderfully attentive server offered us New York cheesecake, tiramisu, French vanilla ice cream and the "Nino's Spumone Bombe," a scoop of chocolate ice cream atop a few maraschino cherries, covered in hard chocolate shell, doused in rum and set on fire. B.J. passed on dessert, but Paul ordered the tiramisu, and I couldn't say no to a flaming dessert. The tiramisu was our favorite of the two, providing a sweet ending to our evening.

Nino's offers a wide variety of steak, veal, chicken, seafood and pasta dishes. As an added bonus, the restaurant typically publishes a "buy one din-

*Nino's cozy atmosphere features soft lighting, finely crafted furniture and unusual artwork done by owner Nino*

*Pippa. He began the restaurant nearly 30 years ago as a combination cafe and gallery to showcase his work. The small coffee bar gradually evolved into the full-service restaurant Nino's is today.*



ner, get one free" coupon in the Get Out! section of the

Thursday Post-Dispatch, making it even more affordable to

enjoy an elegant meal so close to home. For a celebration or just a special dinner out, Nino's is an excellent choice right here in Maryland Heights.

***We want you to be a guest reviewer for this column! Be sure to enter our monthly drawing, either on the web site at [www.marylandheights.com](http://www.marylandheights.com) (click on the "Taste of Maryland Heights" link) or in person in the City Hall lobby at 212 Millwell Drive. Only residents and people who work in Maryland Heights are eligible to win. Good luck!***

#### ***Nino's***

736 Westport Plaza  
Maryland Heights, MO 63146  
(314) 878-4445

#### ***Hours:***

Mon.-Sat.: 5 - 11 p.m.

#### ***Smoking Policy:***

Nino's has separate smoking and non-smoking areas. Pipe and cigar smoking are allowed in the bar area only.