

Dining Out: Carnegie Cafe at the Maplewood Inn

Posted by [Yolanda Wright, Contributing writer](#) May 08, 2008 6:02AM

Lots to applaud at the new Carnegie Cafe

Ambitious family-restaurant owner Bill La Fleur has been doubling his fun lately by adding a second Carnegie Cafe in Liverpool to his one-room Italian wonder on Brewerton Road in North Syracuse.

The new arrival inside the Maplewood Inn offers a spacious dining room, lively bar and outdoor patio. But best of all, it hasn't missed a beat when it comes to fans' favorite Italian and American dishes, extensive menu and desserts made by La Fleur's wife, Karen.

With more room for its catering and on-site events, the new location was already thriving when we visited on a recent Friday evening, when the dining room was full of diners of all ages by 7:30, and the owner was a friendly non-stop presence and overseer.

Tables are comfortably separated in the carpeted room, and decor is unpretentious, with red chairs, vintage-style wall sconces, pale tablecloths and burgundy napkins. Bottles of extra-virgin olive oil are the centerpieces.

Cheerful service was super-attentive, and food was as grand as we remembered it was at its smaller co-star. Carnegie's tall menu offers a welcome bonus for guests eager for smaller portions. Some of the items are listed with two prices, the second a smaller portion at \$3 less.

Offerings include 11 starters (\$4.95 to \$11.95), choose-your-own pasta, with salad or fagioli and six sauce choices (\$11.95 to \$15.95), salads (\$10.95 to \$12.95), four chicken dishes (\$14.95 to \$16.95), eight pasta specialties (\$12.95 to \$18.95), seafood (\$14.95 to \$23.95), three steaks (\$24.95 to \$25.95) three veal (\$17.95) and six house specialties (\$14.95 to \$21.95).

A bottle of Cecchi Chianti (\$24) and fresh Italian bread set the stage for our entrees, one that included pasta fagioli and the other a house salad.

The hearty pasta and bean soup was thick and flavorful with plenty of vegetables and Italian seasoning. A crisp green salad broke no new grounds for creativity, but lettuce was tossed with good balsamic dressing and garnished with black olives, cucumber slices, grape tomatoes and croutons.

Hot entrees tied for first place in generous size and fine flavor. Veal Milanese al Limone (\$17.95) delivered remarkably tender veal medallions that had been sauteed in garlic-wine sauce and gilded with fresh lemon and butter.

The perfectly cooked veal came close to converting me to veal again, after encountering too many overcooked restaurant disasters. Fresh broccoli flowers accompanied the veal, and a side dish of capellini with tasty tomato sauce provided a nice contrast.

Carnegie's chicken and sausage cacciatore (\$14.95) a specialty, tasted as if an Italian grandmother, without a recipe, had combined her family's favorites -- pieces of boneless chicken, spicy sausage, bell peppers, onions and button mushrooms in a zesty tomato sauce.

The result was a memorable feast, and the chosen side dish of thick polenta triangles lightly sauteed and gently touched with tomato sauce was a great addition.

Other entree choices included baby veal Parmigiana (\$17.95), chicken Marsala (\$15.95), chicken portobello (\$17.95), haddock Francaise (\$15.95), pan-seared jumbo scallops (\$23.95), fresh salmon with Burgundy sauce (\$19.95), rigatoni stuffed with cheese and prosciutto with vodka sauce (\$16.95) and jumbo ravioli, stuffed eggplant roladini or homemade lasagna (\$12.95).

Despite having already dined well, we couldn't resist Karen La Fleur's multi-layer lemon-coconut cake (\$5.95) with creamy white filling and frosting. The only thing missing was the baker herself to take a bow.

The new Carnegie Cafe takes reservations and offers plenty of parking near its own entrance to the Maplewood. Having hotel amenities is another plus. Add them up and you'll be glad you came.

Yolanda Wright's weekly Dining Out review is based on an unannounced, anonymous visit. Recent reviews are available at www.syracuse.com/dining.