

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Pizza and pasta are a family tradition

A SLICE OF LIFE: Nizza Pizza serves up delicious Italian fare at prices that won't make you sing for your supper. Transplanted New Yorkers Dave and Hysen Lushaj opened the South Arlington eatery in 1999. They learned the business from their late father, who owned several restaurants in New York, one called Nizza (named after a small Italian village). Hard work and a dedication to authenticity and quality have made Nizza Pizza a neighborhood favorite.

THE REAL DEAL: We stopped by for lunch recently and were immediately impressed by the menu variety and prices. Virtually everything is house-made fresh daily, including a choice of 20 different pasta dishes for only \$5.95 apiece. That price includes a small tossed salad and bread basket. From that list, spinach manicotti was all rich and dense with toothsome pasta, savory marinara and fresh-tasting ricotta cheese. It was served piping hot in a single-serve baking dish. The small tossed salad was your standard variety — lettuce, tomato, carrot and onion; sliced green olives were an added bonus. The warm bread basket contained both miniature rolls blanketed with garlic and butter and a small half-loaf of crusty Italian bread.

Other pasta specials included fettuccine, lasagna, linguine and several varieties of spaghetti. We can't wait to go back and try some more.

PIE IN THE SKY: Friends had raved about Nizza's pizza, so we had to see what all the fuss was about. We ordered an extra-large 18-inch pie (\$9.95) with pepperoni and green olives cooked in a stone oven. When the pie arrived, we noticed a liberal sprinkling of Romano and oregano on top, which exuded a wonderfully enticing aroma. The crust was thin and deliciously yeasty; toppings were more than generous.

Nizza offers all the traditional



CHRIS HAMILTON/Special Contributor

Nizza Pizza's creators bring their Armenian heritage to New York-style pizza, pastas, subs, calzones and strombolis. Brothers Hysen (left) and Dave Lushaj (right) run the shop with Dave's son, Bekim.

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pizza toppings in addition to specialty pizzas like deep-dish Sicilian and pesto pizza. But since this restaurant is known for its classics, we stuck with the tried-and-true.

MORE TO COME: There's really something for every appetite here. Salad aficionados might enjoy the antipasto salad (\$4.95), a huge serving of thinly sliced ham, salami and mozzarella rolled together into little wagon wheels, along with sliced pepperoni, green olives, tomatoes, carrots, onions and a few small heads of cauliflower. Pickled Italian peppers provided a tart tantalizer.

If the aforementioned foods are not to your taste, consider eggplant parmigiana, chicken piccata, hot and cold submarine

Nizza Pizza ★★★

Food ★★★

Atmosphere ★★

Price: 5 (items \$4.50-\$8.95)

additional pizza toppings extra)

Address: 1430 S. Cooper St. at Park

Row, Arlington

Phone: 817-274-5220

Hours: Sunday-Thursday 11 a.m. to

10 p.m., Friday and Saturday 11 a.m.

to 11 p.m.

Credit cards: AE, MC, V

Wheelchair access: Yes

Smoking area: Outdoor patio

Alcohol: BYOB

of velvety sweetness that melts in your mouth, with a chocolate-specked graham cracker crust.

We've also heard that Nizza's cannoli, a silky sweet ricotta wrapped in a fried pastry wrapper, is another stellar ending.

QUEEN FOR A DAY: Nizza is located in a former Dairy Queen space, so don't expect a cozy Italian villa. It's a no-frills affair with checked plastic tablecloths, hanging lamps shaped like baseballs and light music.

It's also right across the street from Arlington High and down the road from the University of Texas at Arlington, so students filter in and out, mainly during lunch hours. Diners order at the counter and a friendly Lushaj brother or employee will bring the food to your table. Everyone here seems to enjoy their jobs. For authenticity, quality and price, Nizza Pizza is hard to beat — any way you slice it.

sandwiches and calzone. We could have eaten for days.

CHEESE, PLEASE: One thing the brothers don't make in-house is cheesecake (\$2.50 a slice). Instead they import it from New Jersey — and it's worth the trip. The plain variety had just the right balance