

WEEKEND PICKS: CASUAL ITALIAN

Thursday November 11, 2010 1:02 PM By [Peter M. Gianotti](#)

The casual, dependable Italian eatery is Long Island's year-round, go-to restaurant. Sometimes, there's pizza; sometimes, panini; almost always, pasta. How can you go wrong? Here are three establishments where you'll be energized and fueled for the upcoming holidays. And the pace at each one is your call.

[La Bottega](#) has many branches in Nassau and Suffolk. The Huntington spot is a cozy, downtown destination. On the menu: 60-plus panini -- vegetarian, chicken, beef, pork, seafood, cured-meat varieties. "Gela" brings together roasted pork, provolone, red peppers and arugula; "Milano," bresaola, fresh mozzarella and arugula; "Foggia," fried eggplant, smoked mozzarella, olive paste, sundried tomato. Good soups, salads.

[La Bottega](#) in Huntington is at 9 Wall St.; 631-271-3540.





Village Tattler



THICK HEADED SICILIAN IS LA BOTTEGA'S SPECIAL GIFT FOR HUNTINGTON

By JoAnn Flynn, on March 12th, 2010



After 9 months of steady business and a loyal lunch crowd that rivals no other, what's next for the owners of La Bottega? One of the four owners sat with me recently to discuss the exciting spring-time plans for this Italian restaurant which is famous for its paninis and salads. La Bottega of Huntington is one of many restaurants spun off from the original La Bottega in Garden City. The Huntington spot has quite a few extra special qualities that make it unique.

Friends, and now partners, Joe & Phyllis Quirke and Ray & Rose Polato became restaurateurs when they opened La Bottega in Huntington. It turns out they have the gift for grub. Rose and Phyllis designed the interior which consists of dark wood paneling, and Tuscan inspired walls and décor that are reminiscent of an Italian family dining room. Ray and Rose deal with much of the behind the scenes business, while Joe and Phyllis spend most

days in the restaurant. You'll notice either one of them walking through the dining room to make sure the diners are pleased.

"Unbelievable pastas", is how Joe described some of their dinner choices. He explained that the ingredients are always fresh and their food is time consuming and labor intensive, in part due to their "thick-headed" chef, Antonio from Sicily. During their dinner service, Chef Antonio has much more freedom to do what he does best, cook Italian food. They serve superb Italian wines, a few California wines, in addition to several types of beer.

What makes La Bottega of Huntington unique is that they are customer friendly, making accommodations to serve their customers' needs. La Bottega recently added gluten free menu items because a regular customer requested them. The seniors in our community are invited to join the senior club which offers 10% off dinner entrees and free non-alcoholic beverages from Monday through Thursday. Kids are very welcome at La Bottega and the children's' menu has more options than parents are used to.

Appetizers and the famous cheese boards are a big hit for those just popping in for an hour or so. The back patio is popular when the weather is nice, and La Bottega will be offering a special "kids' night" during the spring and summer when the weather permits use of their lovely patio.

I can't say enough positive things about this Huntington gem. I will add that I was struck by how happy, friendly and accommodating the staff was at La Bottega, so I asked Joe about the turn-over rate and he said, "I've heard that many restaurants struggle with that issue, but not us." I guess he doesn't know what his secret ingredient is, but to me, it's; food cooked by a great chef, served by friendly and efficient waiters who are encouraged by doting owners.....that's the ticket!

La Bottega is located at 9 Wall Street between Main Street and Gerard, (near Jonathan's Restaurant) in Huntington

Village. <http://labottegaofhuntington.com/>

631-271-2540



More Than Just Panini

By Danny & Sara /foodie@longislandernews.com

Any restaurant that boasts 68 panini might run the risk of typecasting. While La Bottega on Wall Street in Huntington has a lot to do with panini, it's far from the whole show.

Giuseppe and his wife Marisa Ruta opened the inaugural store, located in Garden City South, seven years ago and have slowly expanded his network of restaurants.

"It was a small, cozy little restaurant and I think we've duplicated that well here," said Greenlawn's Joe Quirke, co-owner of the Huntington location with his wife Phyllis, Raymond Polito and his wife Rose, all of Greenlawn. "You hear the kitchen, the people next to you."

Everything you eat is made fresh to order, including La Bottega's trademark oiled and seasoned on the inside paninis – Giuseppe wouldn't have it any other way, Quirke said. Be sure to call ahead and plan accordingly to eat – the food is great and the portions are generous.

Sit-down diners at La Bottega can pick from a selection of nine bruschette (\$6 for choice of three, \$10 for six), such as Gamberi, which combines cool tomato and hot pepper with roasted jumbo shrimp to create a lively starter.

Salad choices include the eclectic Frutta Secca (\$7), which features goat cheese, mixed greens, walnuts, goat cheese and mixed dried fruit tossed in a peppery honey dressing in an inventive, delicious medley of textures and flavors.

The weekly pasta specials, all created by chef Antonio Lombardo, were about \$15 when we visited. The specials included Strozze al Pesto Siciliano, a basil and extra virgin olive oil pesto creation topped in parmigiano cheese, as well as a mushroom and fava bean dish called Risotto al Melfitano, which had an intoxicating aroma to it and a bold, satisfying flavor – the beans and mushrooms complemented each other well.

On the panini front, we opted for the Tonno (\$7.50), a crunchy combination of smoky, savory marinated Italian tuna with baby arugula, salsa cocktail and fresh tomatoes on krispina that had a light note of pepper and had us hooked from the first bite. Check out the chicken cutlet, grilled chicken, steak, pork and vegetarian panini, dressed in just about any combination of goodies imaginable, each with its own unique name.

We didn't touch the promising dessert menu, but swing by on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday for homemade cheesecake (\$5.50). With its cozy surroundings and a lot more ground to cover on the menu, our travels will likely take us there again before too long.

La Bottega

9 Wall Street
Huntington village
631-271-3540

Cuisine: Eclectic Italian with a knack for panini and more

Atmosphere: Intimate, cozy dining

Price: Inexpensive

Hours: 10 a.m. – 10 p.m.,
Monday-Saturday
11 a.m. – 7 p.m., Sunday

[Open: La Bottega of Huntington](#)

Wednesday June 17, 2009 5:11 PM By Joan Reminick



Huntington now has its own La Bottega, an offshoot of the [Garden City South original](#) (there are other La Bottega restaurants in Rockville Centre, Carle Place, Oceanside and Merrick). The informal spot specializes in panini and salads, most of which are authentically Italian, all of which are eminently affordable.

I stopped by for lunch: a big, bright bodacious grilled calamari salad made with sun dried tomato, Gaeta olives (with pits, so be careful), fried capers and chopped scallions over greens. I requested the lime dressing on the side and didn't need much, since the salad was so vibrant. My companion's "Caltanissetta" panino was an electrifying combination of hot sopressata, fontina, roasted hot peppers, tomatoes and baby arugula on ciabatta. Better tomatoes would have made it an even better sandwich.

We ate at a sidewalk table. Lunch, including drinks, tax and tip, came to \$25 for the two of us. On a fine June day, who could ask for more?

La Bottega is at 9 Wall St., Huntington, 631-271-3540.

—Joan Reminick