

Exploring Eugene cuisine? Taste

ITALIAN

Napoli,
Ambrosia
and
Mazzi's
top the list

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Moving to the Eugene area from the San Francisco Area involved an element of culture shock for those of us exposed to some of the greatest Italian cuisine in the world outside of Italy.

There are three institutions close to campus to cater to our withdrawals, however — Napoli, Ambrosia, and Mazzi's.

We have reviewed each with the following considerations in mind: the price, the atmosphere, the cultural authenticity, the culinary skill with which the meal was prepared and, of course, all of the little accouterments that make a dining experience special.

Ambrosia

174 E. Broadway
342-4141
Prices: Moderate
Food: ★★★★★

Mazzi's

3377 E. Amazon Dr.
687-2252
Prices: Moderate
Food: ★★★

Napoli

686 E. 13th Ave.
485-4552
Prices: Reasonable
Food: ★★

Napoli Restaurant & Bakery
686 E. 13th Ave.
485-4552

Napoli didn't begin on a particularly pleasing note; when we arrived we found that the light bulb above our table was out. Napoli's atmosphere is decidedly spartan; sundry Kodachrome pictures of Italian villages decorate the otherwise bare walls.

Of the three restaurants we reviewed, Napoli is closest to the Uni-

versity and most directly serves the campus population. This may be why their prices are so reasonable.

We ordered a pasta marinara, a simple red sauce, that was about \$6. We also ordered a dish called giambotta, a chicken and sausage stew served within a loaf of bread. It was priced at about \$9.

The giambotta was slightly salty for our tastes, and the chicken inside was quite stringy, like the kind you find in the standard burrito, not tender and juicy. The Italian sausage had the consistency of a mottled hot dog, with no visible traces of anise or any other spices.

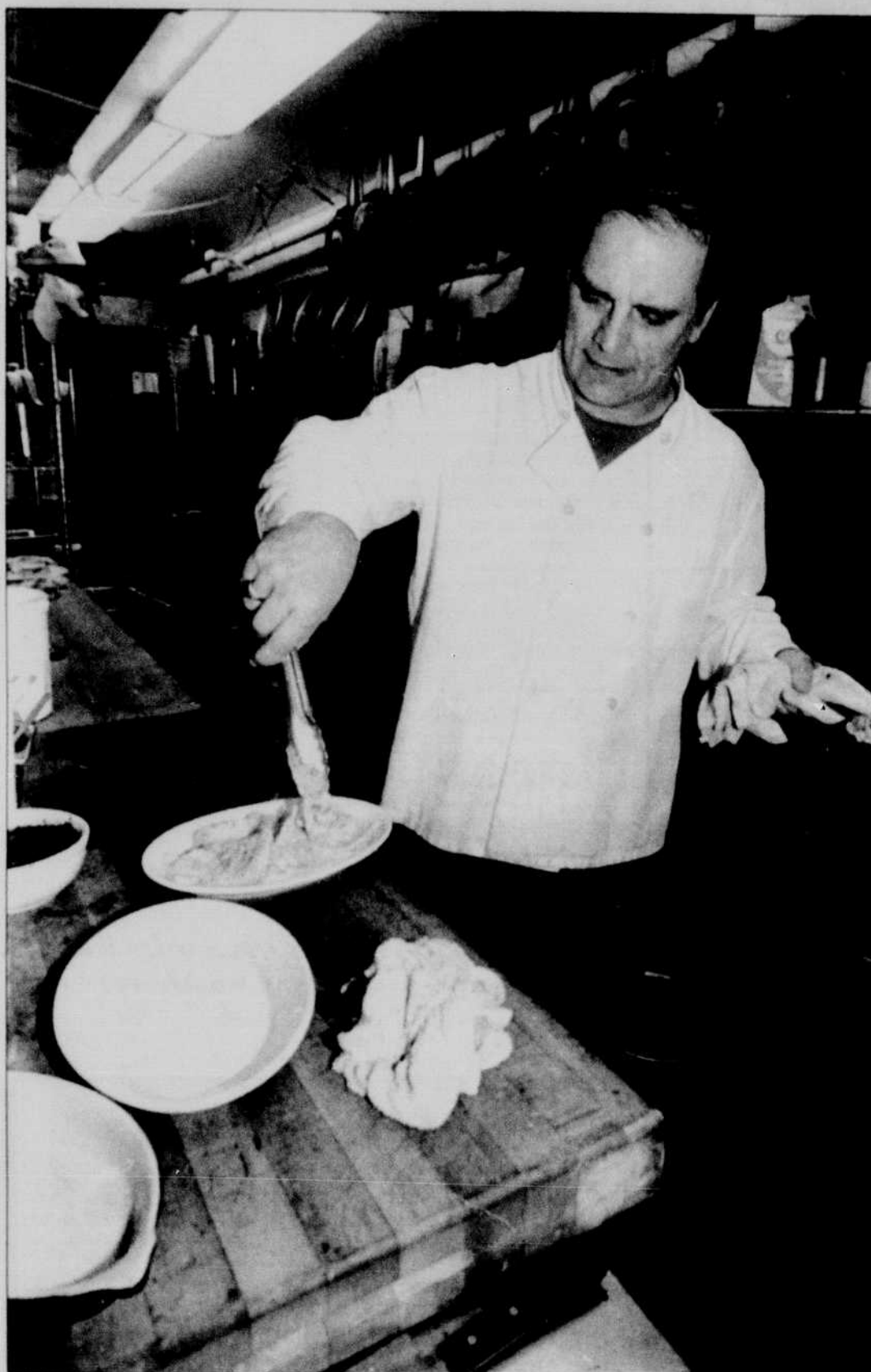
As for the pasta, it was cooked improperly. The noodles must have been left in boiling water for at least four minutes too long, which made the pasta taste like oatmeal with tomato sauce on it. As for the sauce, it was somewhat bland, and it was obvious that the tomatoes were not fresh.

Napoli is not without merit, even though our entrees weren't the best. Their famous focaccia, which comes along with the meal, is cooked perfectly and spiced just right with plenty of parmesan. Also, their ravioli is quite tasty—cooked perfectly with plenty of cheese.

Napoli, to use the colloquial Greek, was etsy-ketsy. For the price and the location, the meal was satisfactory.

Ambrosia Restaurant & Bar
174 E. Broadway
342-4141

Ambrosia is one of the busiest restaurants in town, and this is understandable. Although its prices are higher than Napoli and about



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Dave Proctor, who has been head chef for eight years at Ambrosia, prepares ravioli for customers.

the same as Mazzi's, dollar for dollar we believe it gave us the best meal.

Its atmosphere is quite busy and even a bit rushed, but the wood-paneled walls and warmth of the ovens still give it a somewhat cozy feel.

Crowds can be a problem at Ambrosia. The first time we tried eating there (a Friday night), we had to leave, after an hour of waiting we couldn't bear the grumbling of our stomachs any longer. It would be nice if they took reservations for all parties, but they only do for those with six or more.

When we did finally eat at Ambrosia, we enjoyed a bolognese (meat sauce) pasta, which was \$9.95. Don't let that number fool you however, the portion was twice as large as Napoli's and the price included a wonderful salad. The noodles were perfectly al dente, and the sauce was rich and zesty. Also, we could tell that the tomatoes were fresh and that the other ingredients were also



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Platters of good pasta are so pleasing.

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