

Gelsosomo's among area's upper-crust pizzerias

BY JANET FROMAN
Correspondent

Dining Out

The weather wasn't cooperating; a bone-chilling rain put a damper on any chance of spending time in the great outdoors.

These are the kind of days that call for comfort food.

Pizza's just about the most comfortable food I can think of. For the most part, it's eaten at home, on

paper plates, while crunched up in a corner of the sofa watching rented videos. Add a fire in the fireplace, a bottle of wine and candlelight and you're as comfortable as the dog curled up next to you.

But since I'm literally chained to the computer all day, the thought of going out to eat seemed the best

idea. So it was off to Gelsosomo's Pizzeria in Portage, where the food is consistently good.

Despite arriving at the busiest dining hour, my husband and I were promptly seated and our request for an out-of-the-way table was courteously met by our server, Gwen. Although the back dining room quickly filled with families and couples, it was still pleasantly quiet in a casual setting of Roman statues, Ital-

ian lights and red-and-green decor.

Having skipped lunch, we opted for appetizers to pass the time until the entrees were served. We needn't have worried because we didn't wait more than a few minutes for any of our courses.

My soup of the day was chicken noodle with a broth of just the right consistency, plenty of noodles, sliced carrots and celery, and chunks of chicken. Add to that garlic breadsticks piping hot from the oven, with cups of cheese and spaghetti sauce for dipping.

There was slight disappointment in the deep-fried mozzarella sticks, which seemed ordinary and without a whole lot of taste.

For the main entree, I chose the combo pasta plate for \$9.95. Spaghetti, mostaccioli and my favorite — tricolored, cheese-filled tortellini — were topped with a sweet tomato sauce and an ample link of wonderfully spiced Italian sausage.

The dinner was accompanied by a salad of iceberg lettuce, red onions and cabbage, tomato, cucumber and green pepper. The house dressing of light red vinegar and oil added just enough zest to the vegetables.

Never able to pass up great pizza, my husband chose a medium for us to share with sausage, mushrooms, green and red sweet peppers for \$9.

We've never figured out what the cooks do here to create such wonderful crust, but we know it's unlike anywhere else — thin and crunchy, even somewhat cheese-flavored. Without a doubt, we've found it to be the best and the main reason for coming here.

But we have yet to try Gelsosomo's stuffed pizzas (from \$8 to \$12.75), taco pizzas (\$9 to \$15.50) or pan pizza (\$13 to \$15). Staying with the traditional pizza is just too tempting for us.

Other pasta entrees on the menu include the usual fettuccine, ravioli, lasagna, veal and chicken parmesan, meatballs, and stuffed shells. Prices range from \$6.95 to \$9.75 and half-orders are available.

If you go

Gelsosomo's Pizzeria: County Line Road & U.S. 6, Portage, 763-1545.

Hours: Monday, 4 to 10 p.m.; Tuesday through Thursday, 4 to 11 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 4 p.m. to midnight, and Sunday, 2 to 9 p.m.

Price range: Around \$5 to \$17.

Reservations: Not required, but recommended for larger parties.

Credit cards: Accepted.

Worth noting: Carry-outs available.

Rating: ★★★★★ out of four.

★★★★ — Excellent

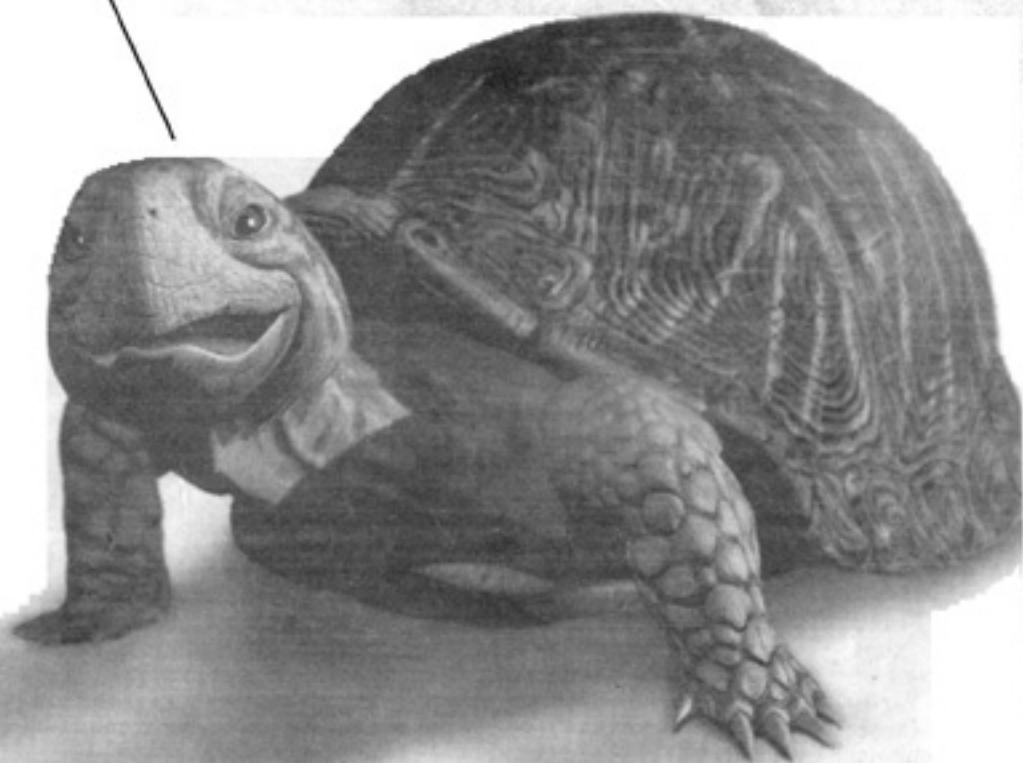
★★★ — Very good

★★ — Good

★ — Fair

0 stars — Poor

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Salads include antipasto, chicken Caesar, spinach, and dinner salads in either individual servings or for two to four people (\$2.25 to \$7.50).

There's also a long list of sandwiches, mostly of the Italian variety (\$4.45 to \$5.75). A children's menu is available, too.

If you're looking for a variety of desserts, you won't find it here. But most diners won't have room for dessert, anyway.

The only one offered, turtle pie, is well worth that overly stuffed feeling you'll have when you leave. A chocolate cookie crust is filled with vanilla ice cream containing swirls of caramel and crowned with chocolate fudge, whipped cream and pecans.

We came away pleased with ourselves that we'd made the right decision on what and where to eat this gloomy day. Having Gwen as our ever-attentive server made our dining all the more pleasurable.

But one thing we'd forgotten is how "uncomfortable" we feel when overeating even the best of "comfort" foods.