

Biaggio's is a taste of Italy in Lincoln

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Staff Writer

Pane e Vino, one of Lincoln's best Italian restaurants, had a decline in business and went out of business a few months ago. I didn't think anything could help bring the location back to life. It turns out all it needed was a little Aguglia.

Scott Aguglia took over the West O building and opened Biaggio's. He definitely took the food, atmosphere and service and kicked them up a notch. Aguglia, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln student and backup receiver for the Huskers, kept the class and style of Pane e Vino and added a few touches of his own. He redesigned the interior with a new paint job and a sharper, cleaner look. He dimmed the lights and brought in a jazz singer for live music on Thursday nights. And he put a few new favorites on the menu.

Biaggio's has a traditional Italian menu, with a variety of chicken, steak and seafood pasta dishes. The restaurant has a traditional Caesar salad and an Aguglia special pasta salad, but I recommend the house salad. The homemade Italian dressing is a bit more spicy and flavorful than you would expect. It's a large leaf salad, so it's more difficult to eat. It's made with Romaine lettuce and not the field greens so many restaurants serve.

In the way of appetizers, Biaggio's has mozzarella sticks, calamari and bruschetta. I tried the scampi sautee - small shrimp in a light butter sauce. The taste was a bit sour, but overall good seafood for a restaurant in Nebraska.

The menu has all the standard dishes, but I decided to try the items that weren't as customary. The Pollo Dello Chef is a large piece of chicken breast stuffed with spinach and provolone, served on a bed of small penne

REVIEW

BIAGGIO'S

WHERE: 500 Sun Valley Blvd.

WHAT: Fine Italian dining, \$10-30 a meal

BOTTOM LINE: Like family, west of town

pasta. I didn't think anything could rival Chicken Parmigiana, but this dish was great. It's basically an Italian version of Cordon Bleu.

The Pasta Arriabiata is penne with a spicy red sauce and bits of bacon. It wasn't as good as the chicken, but was an interesting twist nonetheless. The sauce is light and not terribly spicy, and the bacon adds a nice amount of meaty flavor.

Biaggio's offers Spumoni and Tiramisu for dessert, again showing that it remembers the little things. The good service, live jazz and great menu come at a price, though - it is a bit overpriced. But its biggest obstacle is without a doubt its location. The restaurant is situated north of West O Street near the Handy Man hardware store and Big John's Billiards - not exactly elite company. But it's out of downtown in an open area, providing a nice view of Lincoln's skyline (if you can call it that) and the blue Nebraska sky.

This is the kind of place that would do huge business if it was at 40th & Old Cheney, but will have trouble building clientele just like Pane e Vino. But it deserves to have dedicated, faithful patronage. Aguglia will come out and shake your hand, listen to the old man on the piano with you and make you feel like you're part of the family. So even if it's far from your home, Biaggio's will make you feel like you're there.

Old standard IHOP still pleases

IHOP from page 7

sausages wrapped in small pancakes. No this one isn't necessarily for the kids, it's just a twist on an old favorite.

Still, the pancakes bring home the bacon in this household. There are ten different styles of pancakes, including banana nut, potato, buttermilk and crepe-style. My favorite is the chocolate chip pancake. If you ask nicely, the server will probably bring you the "Funny Face" - a chocolate pancake with a whipped cream mouth and a cher-

ry nose. It's a dessert and breakfast two-in-one miracle of IHOP technology.

Even though the pancakes are the best thing on the menu, I wouldn't say that they're outstanding. IHOP's claim to fame is its low, low prices and 24-hour menu. This isn't as much a place to eat as it is a late night staple. IHOP has this aura that attracts all sorts of people for all sorts of reasons. IHOP isn't a restaurant, it's just IHOP. If you don't go, you're missing out. Maybe not on the food, but on the experience.

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