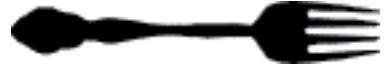


Portage Park Palates *Jill & Jan*



Half of Portage Park Palates lives near the corner of Montrose and Milwaukee, so

when we feel like pizza, we pick up the phone and call **Pizza by Alex**. If we are adventurous, we walk down and get it, or if we are lazy, they will deliver- even though it's only 3/4 of a block. Sometimes we grab a bottle of wine or a six pack of our favorite beer of the moment, and head over to dine in. Alex Rodriguez has operated the restaurant for years. He saw the potential when it was a Caponies, and bought the place. He knew he could make a successful business. And he has

always been a great friend of the PPNA, donating food, gift certificates, and a spot in

his window to advertise our events. He is always glad to see us and say Hello.

We reviewed the restaurant in 2008. Alex had just opened the store front next to the take out, and made a lovely sit down restaurant, complete with a brick oven pizza oven. We had a great time, looking back, and reading the old review. We went there for dinner the other night, and realized they have upped their game. There is a new chef in town, besides Alex, and he is bringing new sauces and new dishes and turning the menu upside down, in a good way. So, we decided it was time to review Pizza by Alex again. I can tell you, that this place is doing a very good business, and is getting a following.

I met my partner on a Thursday night last week, and three other members. We took over two tables pushed together near the pizza oven. We brought beer and wine, and the beer was placed into a bucket of ice. There was water all around, and a crusty warm loaf of bread, with butter, or olive oil and parmesan cheese to dip. We looked at the menu and the new specials sheet inside. There is a new to go menu as well. Much larger and glossier. We opted for an antipasti salad appetizer for \$5.99, which includes ham, provolone, pepperoni, black olives and tomatoes, as well as artichoke hearts and marinated sliced mushrooms. It was delicious. Three of our party decided to share a pizza. They picked a fourteen inch thin crust with sausage and mushrooms for \$12.50, and they had plenty with a few pieces to take home. They loved it, and though I know they would have gladly shared, two of us opted for a new item on the menu and an old standby. I knew they had a new salmon dish, and since I love salmon, I try to get it if it's on the menu. It's still not formally on the menu, but I ordered it and was rewarded with a well cooked filet with a butter wine sauce, grilled vegetables (zucchini and red peppers) with a choice of soup or salad. I picked the cream of

broccoli, and a choice of a side of pasta, and I picked farfalle with pesto. The sauce was delicious, and not your normal pesto, but a buttery garlicky basil sauce that was hard to put down. The other diner ordered Chicken Parmigiana (\$13.95), and he ordered salad with blue cheese and marinara sauce to go with his spaghetti. They goofed and brought out a second salad right when he was finishing the first one, so he ate that one, too. It is his go to dish when we dine out at Pizza by Alex. He loves it, and he gets it all the time. Quite a recommendation.

But I think it is all great, and now it's even better. It was warm by the brick pizza oven, and the night was a little warm. I moved a little further away from the oven and we ordered two desserts to share. The first was the classic Tiramisu (\$4.50), and the other a flan (\$2.50). We all had a bite, and they were wonderful. They also offer cannoli (filled to order), fried dough, cheesecake and ice cream. And this restaurant offers so much else. I just ordered a meat lovers sub. The big one is \$6.00 and I split it with my other half. I also ordered a full order of farfalle and pesto for dinner, which came with bread and a side salad We will have that tonight with a couple or leftover pork chops. We ordered cannoli to have for dessert tonight, but they forgot to add it to our order, and when I called, he apologized for the oversight, and offered to comp our next two cannoli's. Nice guy.

But wait, there's more. Pizza by Alex is a great place to have your next party. In fact, sometimes the restaurant is full due to a party. We went when a wedding rehearsal dinner was taking over the back of the restaurant. Alex put several pizzas on the bar for the party to serve themselves, but the party came complete with salads, entrees and desserts. The party brought their own cases of beer and boxes of wine. And it looked like they were having a great time.

HHHHmmmmmm....good food, byob, friends, what's not to like?

So, when you are wondering where to go for your next dinner out, grab a bottle of wine, or a few beers (Miska's is around the corner if you need to buy it), and get a

table at Pizza by Alex. And have a great evening. You'll leave stuffed and happy and

your wallet will be pleasantly surprised. There are a few deals, like dinner for two for

\$25, which includes house salad, one appetizer, one pasta entree, one 12 inch brick

oven Specialty pizzas and one dessert. It makes me hungry and I just had lunch.

Pizza by Alex is at 5040-77 W. Montrose. It's open Monday through Thursday from 10:00am to 10:00pm and Friday and Saturday from 10 to midnight, and Sunday from 11am to 10pm. Their phone number is 773-427-8900. They deliver, \$2.00 charge and \$10 dollar minimum. You can call and pick up. Order online, which is new-Pizzabyalex.com Or dine in. All fine choices. And say Hi to Alex, one of the best reasons to go to Pizza by Alex. And the waitress is nice, too. Alisha waited on us last Thursday, and she did a great job. And there were a few other tables with happy customers. The secret is out.

We invite members of the PPNA to join us as well as continuing to ask for suggestions naming your favorite restaurant in the area. In 2010 we hope you will continue to suggest restaurants and join us when we meet. If you would like to join us, our only requirement is that you do not notify the restaurant. We all pay for our own portion of the check, share the dishes and offer opinions for the review. An article about the restaurant will appear in the following PPNA newsletter. Send your emails to membership@portagepark.org. or communications@portagepark.org.