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MAFIAoZA's Knows Its Customers

Meeting Expectations Keeps Them Coming Back for More

By Thom Householder

A favorite on the Nashville dining scene since its launch in 2003, MAFIAoZA's restaurant continues to "wow" capacity crowds nightly with its authentic Italian menu options, impressive Old and New World wine list, and comfortable, welcoming ambiance.

The popular 1920s New York-style Italian restaurant – known for serving the finest stone-oven pizza in the Southeast – offers dishes using fresh, seasonal ingredients, many of which are locally grown and produced. Corporate Chef and Catering Director Brett Corrieri has earned a solid reputation for his commitment to presenting flavorful, memorable dining experiences at MAFIAoZA's to his loyal and still-growing patron base.

MAFIAoZA's, which caters as graciously to families and office parties as to singles' events, music industry celebrities, and Tennessee NFL players, understands that people come to the restaurant for different reasons. As such, the talented restaurant team has a core strategy in place to make sure that every customer finds what he or she is looking for.

"We're open from dinner until 3 am, and obviously serve different types of customers in that time span," says Corrieri. "Families with children know us as a great place to enjoy a pizza, while singles and young couples enjoy our social scene. Then, since we're near so many recording studios along Nashville's Music Row, we see plenty of late-night business from artists and songwriters."

Roll Out the Welcome Mat for Families

Parents with young children appreciate MAFIAoZA's so much in part because their kids are welcome up in front of the kitchen window to experiment and play with pizza dough – all while getting to observe the busy kitchen, and without bothering other customers. The kids, happy as can be – full of pizza and working on sculptures with the dough – are on their own. Corrieri says that parents value that unique element of the restaurant.

Some restaurants may view kids as being "more trouble than they're worth," but not MAFIAoZA's. "It's a matter of making sure the kids are comfortable and relaxed, which translates into a longer meal-time for their parents," Corrieri notes. "And that extra time for parents means extra revenue for MAFIAoZA's."

"What we know is that giving the kids something fun to do that's open-ended gives the parents an opportunity to linger a bit longer over their meal," he adds. "And they'll often enjoy a glass of wine or dessert with their friends that they likely wouldn't order if their kids were getting bored or edgy."

Let the People Talk!

Another important segment of MAFIAoZA's market is the young professional crowd. Whether they're coming to mix and mingle – particularly during the warmer months when the expansive outdoor patio offers plenty of space

– or on a date or with a group of friends, MAFIAoZA's makes sure the food and beverage choices fit this lively, social scene.

"These folks have plenty of disposable income, but they also have a lot of options in town to choose from," according to Lars Kopperud, Co-Owner and General Manager. "Having a fairly wide variety of tasty menu choices – at reasonable price points – is key. By offering a good variety of options, our guests can enjoy a complete meal, or enjoy drinks and nibble small plates that are easy to share with a table."

For example, Chef Corrieri's piccolo morsi – "small bites" – offer perfect "finger food" selections for a table buzzing with conversation. The piccolo morsi menu features a selection of imported cheeses, premium Italian cured meats, specialty olives, and housemade appetizers that diners can combine in sizes

to suit the number in their group.

MAFIAoZA's knows how to have fun, and features its own extensive Don Giorgio Viticoltore Pyrite-Rated wine list, showcasing 200 bottles and 57 excellent wines by the glass, which allows diners the opportunity to try a variety of wines and discover new favorites.

Those choices are clearly labeled and grouped with plain English descriptions to make it easy for people to choose wines that suit their tastes.

"We're always trying to think one step ahead of our guests," says Kopperud.

"If their hardest decision of the evening becomes not where to dine, but which of MAFIAoZA's great selections to choose from our menu, then we're definitely onto something solid."

Be Unique

In a city the size of Nashville, MAFIAoZA's offers interesting, top-notch food late at night, and has managed to create a unique opportunity unmatched by any of its competitors. These elements translate well in terms of business among corporate guests as well. The restaurant has hosted groups as diverse as national pharmaceutical companies and National Football League players and executives.

"Many of our business customers who choose MAFIAoZA's for their large corporate events or functions do so because they know they won't be rushed out the door, and that the evening really belongs to them," Kopperud notes. "If executives are going to spend the time and resources needed to hold large, successful business dinners, they want to know that they own that restaurant space for the evening. We really do cater to that audience with more than just our food and wine options. It's service that sells in the end, plain and simple. And it's quality service that keeps businesses coming back to MAFIAoZA's for their large corporate events year after year."

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