



CANNOVA'S

BY RICH BELMONT



If you are not already a regular patron of Cannova's for pizza and pasta chances are you have been there at least once or twice. The original Cannova's is in Freeport, IL; there is this one in Galena, IL and the newest one is in Neenah, WI.

Cannova's was founded in 1921 by Anthony Cannova who came to the United States from, as my grandparents used to say, the "old country", Sicily. He opened a grocery with a pizzeria and tavern in the back of the store. His son, Frank, grew up working in the business. He took it over from his father when he returned from serving in the Pacific in World War II. At that time pizza was just becoming America's latest food fad since it was "discovered" by US servicemen stationed in Italy.

Cannova's soon became well known throughout Northern Illinois for serving delicious pizzas, pastas and sandwiches made from homemade sauces, breads, pizza and pasta dough.

Today Cannova's is owned by Frank's daughter Linda Cannova Beckman and her husband Patrick Beckman. Like her father before her Linda has literally grown up in the pizzeria. The next time you visit Cannova's check out the photos on the walls. They give you a glimpse of 94 years of history.

Linda's husband Pat has been part of the management team of Cannova's for many years now. He is also an accomplished classical and jazz composer/ pianist and is the former Artist-In-Residence at Highland Community College in Freeport, IL.

Cannova's of Galena opened on Main Street in 1994. It is located in a building that was originally a hardware store. Prior to becoming a pizzeria the building was the home of the original Poopsie's which is still in Galena but has moved around a few times.



Mitch Schaub has worked in Cannova's of Galena since 2007. He is now the Executive Chef and General Manager. In 1994 Chef Mitch started his culinary career by completing a Culinary Apprenticeship Program at the University of Iowa. At various times Mitch worked in food and beverages at the Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa,

was a cook and server for Chef Jim Terry at the now closed El Dorado in Galena. He also worked in the Backstreet Steak & Chophouse and the Log Cabin in Galena and was a cook at the Candlelight in Redington Shores, FL. One of the highlights of his career was a training program he attended at Spiaggia in Chicago. The classes were conducted by world renowned Chef Joël Robuchon the French Chef and Restaurateur. Chef Robuchon is the author of several French cookbooks and operates at least a dozen restaurants around the world with a total of 25 Michelin Guide stars among them. (Fun Fact: Chef Schaub is the face, voice and ring announcer of Mixed Martial Arts, Pinnacle Combat in the Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin region. He is also proficient in the German, Spanish, Norwegian, Latin, Portuguese and Klingon languages.)

There is more culinary talent at this restaurant, too. Sous Chef James Paradiso is a graduate of Johnson & Wales University College of Culinary Arts in Providence, RI. He has been a chef at Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa and the Dubuque Golf and Country Club. The Front Manager, Shanna Powell, has been with Cannova's since 1997.

Cannova's has a full bar and is well known for its Italian Margaritas. Now you might be thinking a Margarita is a Mexican drink not Italian, right? Well ok, the standard ingredients are tequila, lime juice, simple syrup and triple sec orange liqueur. Well, here the orange liqueur is Solerno. This 80 proof clear liqueur is made in Sicily from three distillations. The first distillation is from the fruit of the Sanguinello orange (called blood orange in the US). The second is of the zest or orange peel to capture the citrus oils. The third distillation is of Sicilian lemons to balance out the orange sweetness.



There is also a very interesting collection of wines to go with your Italian dinners. I particularly like the Gabbiano Chianti Classico from Tuscany; Australia's Penfolds Koonunga Hill Shiraz and the Kumbaya Red Blend from Sonoma County, CA. With chicken and seafood I prefer the Due Torri Delle Venezie Pinot Grigio or the Columbia Crest Grand Estates Chardonnay from Washington State.

For appetizers the Garlic Bread or Bruschetta (bru-sket-ta) are good choices. They are made with fresh in-house baked bread. However, I highly recommend the Antipasto Platter. It's a generous assortment of mortadella, capicola, Genoa salami, prosciutto, pepperoni, black and green olives, cherry peppers, pepperoncini, tomatoes and mozzarella. The lunch meats are all high quality. For example the mortadella, a finely ground heat cured pork sausage, is the good kind with whole black peppercorns. And the capicola is milder and contains a lot less fat than the traditional Italian pork cold cut.



There are four sandwiches on the menu. The Italian Sausage sandwich is a traditional pork sausage served with onions and green peppers. The Chicken Anthony is a marinated grilled chicken breast. I really like the Meatballs because they are made Italian style

with 100% ground beef, eggs, bread crumbs, parsley, oregano and fresh basil. The Mufalatto is Cannova's version of the New Orleans Muffuletta. It is a rather thick sandwich with several slices of mortadella, capicola, salami, olive mixture, fresh tomatoes and mozzarella on toasted fresh baked bread.



There is a pasta dish for everyone. You choose spaghetti, fettuccini, angel hair or rigatoni. The Traditional Red Sauce Pasta is the most popular Specialty of the House. The pasta you pick is covered with a homemade sweet tomato sauce puréed and simmered with onions, peppers and olive oil. It is different from the Marinara which is a chunky style sauce of crushed tomatoes, garlic, Italian seasonings and olive oil. I enjoyed the Chicken Parmigiana but I found the Chicken Piccata to be immensely more satisfying. In this dish a lightly breaded chicken breast is sautéed in white wine, lemon, butter, garlic, capers and artichoke hearts. I am impressed with the copious amounts of capers and artichokes that are in this dish! My server, the very capable and knowledgeable Dawn Livingston, suggested I have this one on rigatoni. I must say the thicker pasta was the perfect vehicle to transport the subtle flavors of all the ingredients into my mouth.

After eating at Cannova's several times I have noticed I must pay attention when my server describes the Friday and Saturday night specials. They are outstanding and are obviously designed to showcase the considerable talents of Chefs Schaub and Paradiso. For example this weekend the Friday Specials are Fresh Tuna Loins Greek Style. They are grilled with feta cheese, lemon juice and Kalamata olives. There will also be Braised Beef homemade ravioli. On Saturday there will be a Seared Salmon Special and Grilled Flat Iron Steak rubbed with the chef's own blend of seasonings and served with either a Cabernet or Chianti reduction.

Of course, Cannova's is first and foremost a pizzeria. The current menu offers 17 different superb pizzas. The homemade dough is rolled out only when a pizza is ordered. It will have a homemade pizza sauce and fresh 100%

mozzarella cheese. The most popular is Cannova's Classic. It is made with fresh garlic, spinach, diced tomatoes, black olives, mozzarella and sweet basil.

Some of the other fabulous choices are the Supreme with onion, pepperoni, mushrooms, green peppers, sausage, mozzarella and oregano; the Pesto with homemade pesto made from basil, pine nuts, parmesan cheese, garlic and olive oil; and the Chicken Alfredo with mozzarella, chicken and broccoli and Alfredo sauce. Incidentally, Alfredo sauce is made to order. That means a cook must prepare each individual order's sauce from butter, cream, garlic, parmesan, Asiago and Romano cheese.



Some of the pizzas are award winners. The Sicilian containing diced tomatoes, large chunks of all-beef Italian sausage, pepperoncini, mozzarella and basil was voted Winner of Best Traditional Pizza by Pizza Today magazine. The Chicken Tuscany made with garlic, diced tomatoes, white chicken, roasted red peppers, ricotta cheese and topped with honey mustard sauce was the number 2 pizza at the International Pizza Expo in Las Vegas.



As you know, after a fine dinner I always recommend you finish it off with a pleasing scrumptious dessert. At Cannova's this is really important. They are all made by the chefs on the premises. The current choices are Four Layer Chocolate Cake, Tiramisu, Mixed Berry (blackberry and raspberry) Sorbetto (this is just the Italian name for French sorbet) and Blackberry Shortcake. In my opinion the Tiramisu is worth its weight in gold! Chef Mitch makes this in the traditional way. Ladyfingers are dipped in coffee, layered with a whipped mixture of sugar, eggs, mascarpone cheese and flavored with cocoa.

I'll be going back to Cannova's real soon for a Pizza Siciliana or Sfinzione (sfin-show-nay) in Italian, a nice glass of Chianti and most definitely Tiramisu. I hope to see you there: Buon Appetito!

CANNOVA'S

247 North Main Street, Galena, IL 61036
815-777-3735

Hours: Mon–Thu: 5–9 PM; Fri: 5–10 PM;
Sat: Noon–10 PM; Sun: Noon–9 PM

Dining Style: Casual

Noise Level: Conversational

Recommendations: Antipasto Platter; Chicken Piccata; Traditional Red Sauce Pasta; Tomato Basil Cream Pasta; Mufalatto; Cannova's Classic Pizza; Typo Pizza; Supreme Pizza; Tiramisu; Blackberry Shortcake

Liquor Service: Full Bar, Italian Margaritas

Prices: Apps: \$3.00–\$14.00; Dinner: \$8.00–\$21.00

Pay Options: Cash, Local Checks, Debit, MasterCard, Visa, Discover, AMEX

Accessibility: Low Step to Front Door; Restrooms

Kids Policy: No Kids Menu but pizza & pasta options; Boosters: Yes; High Chairs: Yes

Reservations: No • **Catering:** Yes (up to 50 people)

Take Out: Yes • **Delivery:** Yes (free in Galena, \$5 in Territories) • **Parking:** On Street