

RESTAURANT REVIEW

By Melinda Mims, Director Concierge Services and Lulu Hatter, International Food Aficionado

PASTA BRIONI, NEIGHBORHOOD ITALIAN DINING, 4416 N. Miller, Road, Scottsdale, just south of Camelback, ph: 480.994.0028.

I'm always on the look out for Italian cooking that would rival the days I spent in Italy. Barely any elbow room at the dining table because of the abundance of food, family, and friends; at some point, someone would start singing and maybe some dancing, but it wasn't a party, it was life. I'm excited to say, I have found such a rival here in Scottsdale; **Pasta Brioni, Neighborhood Italian Dining**.

The minute you walk through their doors you feel better; the air is filled with family, neighbors, conversation, laughter, and a scented kaleidoscope of food and freshness. Bring any appetite, the portions are big, but they can plate em' up by the half or quarter.

We started with the *Antipasti*, red peppers that are roasted daily, perfect in presentation and texture, along with some fresh mozzarella, prosciutto, kalamata olives, tomato, and basil. The *Bread* is made each day and it is perfect, a slightly golden color like the sun's reflection, dense not doughy, with a crackle crust dusted with parmesan cheese. If you're going to spend any calories on carbs, do it with this bread, I ate mine neat.

The *Spinach & Ricotta Dumplings* are like gnocchi bubbles popping in your mouth, da-lish! If you're not sure what to order for your first time, the most popular is the *Chicken Martini*. Melinda said she could survive the rest of her life on the *Rigatoni Bolognese*, just the right amount of sausage, pasta, and sauce blooming with flavors you know but are somehow unidentifiable at this moment. Honorable mentions go to: *Rigatoni Four Cheese* (Fontina, Ricotta, Gorgonzola, Provolone) and *Shrimp Brioni*, butterfly cut and delightfully toasted. Along with noteworthy food is the wait staff of "calendar" men; we found ourselves saying, "Heaven can wait!"

Save a little room for their signature *Tiramisu*. It's meant to be shared, served in one big bowl atop a glassware stem. **Pasta Brioni** does it a little different; the top layer has you thinking you've started on a dusted truffle, and if you get to the bottom, ah, there's the sweet finish!