



SPORTS, B1

GIANTS FALL TO COWBOYS

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2013

A GANNETT COMPANY

\$1.00

FOLLOWING YOUR PASSION

FROM THEIR KITCHEN, A COMMUNITY IS FED



Nunzio'sKitchen owners, Marco and Michael Colandrea, are shown with customers Andrew Guioamar (front left) and Joseph Guioamar in the Colandrea's Sayreville restaurant. PHOTO COURTESY OF MARCO COLANDREA

Restaurant gives Italian cooking a new twist

By Paul C. Grzella
@PaulGrzellamycj

When Marco Colandrea starts walking back and forth with his head down, his colleagues at Nunzio's-Kitchen in Sayreville know something new is on the way.

It means that soon they will be adding another type of pizza to the 94 already on the menu at the storefront restaurant in a shopping center on Raritan Street.

And "new" at Nunzio'sKitchen doesn't mean a different brand of sausage or pepperoni. The list of pizzas includes "taco flavored kisses, ground beef with white cannelloni beans," a five-cheese mac and cheese with bacon creation, and another topped with fire-braised pork shoulder (cooked for five hours) with sweet and sour glazed popcorn shrimp and lemon zest.

"It has a sweet-crunchy tart taste," the self-

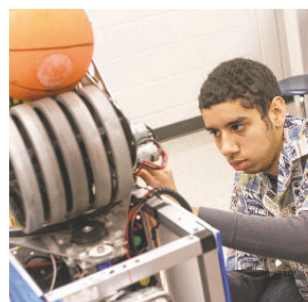
See NUNZIOS, Page A9



A community book case was added to the restaurant. PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL COLANDREA

WATCH THE VIDEO

Marco Colandrea spreads the word about his food at MyCentralJersey.com/MyCJVideos.



Robotix team member Michael Parrilla prepares the robot for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. JASON TOWLEN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Robotix team to lead parade

By Cheryl Makin
@CherylMakin

NORTH BRUNSWICK — While Santa Claus may bring up the rear of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York, leading the 87th annual event on Thursday will be members of the high school's Raider Robotix team.

As part of FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), the nonprofit organization founded in 1989 by inventor Dean Kamen to inspire young people's interest and participation in science and technology, the Raider Robotix are one of five award-winning FIRST Robotics Competition teams who, along with their robots, will be marching the route of the parade. The parade begins at 9 a.m. Thanksgiving Day and can be seen on NBC.

Joining Team 25, aka the Raider Robotix, will be Team 1538, The Holy Cows, from San Diego, Calif., Team 1477, Texas Torque, from The Woodlands, Texas, Team 180, S.P.A.M., from Stuart, Fla., and Team 16, The Bomb Squad, from Mountain Home, Ark.

The Raider Robotix were chosen because they were FIRST world champions for the 2012 season, said Head Coach Wayne Cokeley, a science teacher at the high school. He and four students — junior Sarah Sleiman, 16, junior Kevin Zimmerman, 16, sophomore Samir Shah, 15, and 2013 NBHS graduate Tori

See ROBOTICS, Page A2

TO WATCH

The 87th annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade will be aired live from New York City beginning at 9 a.m. Thursday on NBC.

INSIDE

Local students to march in Macy's parade. **Story, A2**

from page one

NUNZIOS

Continued from Page A1

trained Colandrea said. "It has every flavor you will want in one bite."

"I don't know how it all works," he added of his style of cooking and doing business, "but I just know that clarity flows from my craziness — and it works." "New" isn't just about the food. It's about the entire approach to business.

From the community book shelves in the front of the shop, to its completely organic and non-genetically modified foods, from the tattoos on the chefs and staff, and the Human Rights Campaign stickers on the front window, the owners of Nunzio'sKitchen are working to create a different type of dining and community restaurant experience.

"We've had some awesome dialogues with our customers," the 23-year-old Colandrea said. "It's a beautiful experience."

How it began

Nunzio's was opened by Colandrea's father, Pasquale, in 1979. Today it is run by Marco and his brother, Michael, 28. The two were born in America but spent part of their childhood in Italy.

"We moved all over the tri-state area and back to Italy, as my father searched for a suitable career," Marco said. "We finally ended up in Sayreville."

They grew up working in their father's pizzeria/restaurant and learned every aspect of the business, from cooking and

creating recipes, to busi- ning tables and cleaning toilets.

"We do know how to do everything," Marco Colandrea said. "It makes you a more understanding boss."

The brothers' father gave them the business about five years ago. Michael took on more of the work while Marco tried his hand at other jobs. He first went into the police academy but that didn't work out, he said, and he became a paramedic for Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. At the same time, he continued to help Michael at the restaurant.

"I realized that I had to narrow it down," Marco Colandrea said. "I stayed with the restaurant because I didn't want to leave my brother."

As the two worked together, they decided that they wanted to go in a different direction from their father, creating a different type of menu, a different type of eating experience, and a different atmosphere from a traditional Italian eatery.

"We wanted to break stereotypes," Michael Colandrea said, whether it was about what they cooked or what they looked like.

Marco was the first one to get tattoos — at the age of 17, he started with an image of St. Michael. Now colorful tattoos cover many parts his body and his older brother has followed suit.

This spirit of adventure is reflected in how they have set up the shop. From a relatively nondescript storefront in a "weathered mall," as the

eatery's press material say, patrons enter a wide open space where dozens of the day's pizzas are displayed in a neat case. Specials are written on a blackboard wall. Slices are available, as well as whole pies. The brothers say they average about 300 pies on a steady day and 500 on a Friday. Their motto: "Every day is going to be the busiest day of the year."

A newly installed community wall of books with a mix of interesting titles separates the front walk-in space from the dine-in restaurant portion. Marco Colandrea said he was a little concerned about the reaction some of the clientele might have to some of the more controversial titles. "But it's really created some great open dialogue between me and some of our clients," he said.

Patrons who dine in can expect the dialogue to continue as they talk with their waiters or waitresses who are encouraged by the brothers to "make a personal connection with everyone who comes in here" and allow diners to enjoy the entire restaurant experience, Marco Colandrea said. "When you work for me, I want you to be you, and I want the customers to know you."

Be who you are

The brothers are committed to buying organic and local. It may cut into their profit margin, but they feel strongly that it's the right way to live, and to do business.

"I want to be happy and content with what I do,"

IF YOU GO

Nunzio'sKitchen is at 521 Raritan St., Sayreville. Call 732-727-1060 or visit Nunzio'sMenu.com.

Marco Colandrea said.

The brothers have surrounded themselves with family and friends who work with them, including Michael's girlfriend, Angela Carolo, and Marco's roommate, best friend and "right-hand man," Mike "Mums" Leonard.

"Since we employ friends and family, we put of lot of pressure on ourselves to succeed," Marco Colandrea said.

The community they are creating at their restaurant isn't just about them. It's also about getting involved and helping the local community and activists-driven organizations. This includes — but is not limited to — Habitat for Humanity, March Against Monsanto, the Sayreville Public School's special-needs program, Toys for Tots, and a Thanksgiving Family Sponsorship Drive, in which the brothers will provide dinners for families in need.

"I really believe in equality for all, and try to live and speak that way," Marco Colandrea said. That included speaking at a recent rally in Princeton about his personal beliefs and his sexuality.

"I was scared to show my tattoos at first, to say I was gay, to say who I am," he said. "But the feedback was amazing. You know, I wondered why was I scared? What was I afraid



Nunzio'sKitchen co-owner Marco Colandrea (kneeling bottom right) and Adam Opiets are shown with other volunteers at a Habitat for Humanity event. PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL COLANDREA

of? Being there, for people to see, it really helps a lot."

For the brothers, it's all about looking forward. They constantly are experimenting and adding to their menu, adding twists to traditional favorites. Meiwei calamari, for example, features calamari fried and sauteed with roasted red peppers in a sweet sesame glaze. Veal braciola is stuffed with provolone, prosciutto and baby shrimp.

These tastes certainly have their fans. The restaurant was honored with Best Italian Food in this fall's Home News Tribune Best of the Best readers' choice program.

The brothers have different working styles, but also say they trust one another that they are going to do the right thing for the business, themselves

and those they work with. While they are working with other local business owners on ideas to distribute some of their products, they remained focused on making something new with their father's legacy, and the community and dining experience they offer to their customers.

"I have a drive I can't shake," Marco Colandrea said. "It's about the passion. We are the first ones here and the last ones to leave. I love what I do."

Paul C. Grzella is general manager/editor of the Courier News, Home News Tribune and MyCentralJersey. He would like to share your passion with readers. Contact him at 908-243-6601; pgrzella@njpressmedia.com.