

fancy menu without fancy prices. Try the veal dishes and the chicken cacciatore. 119 W. Virginia St., McKinney. 972-562-1102. \$\$. T

D BEST • Mi Placi. Still one of the nicest rooms in town, serving some of the nicest Italian food in town. They still make fresh pasta on hand (you can see it being done in a chamber at the entrance), and risotto is brought to the table by a member of the kitchen crew and spooned from pan to bowl. It was completely unnecessary, but most people love the personal attention. 14854 Montfort Dr. 972-934-8424. \$\$. T

Nicola's. Moving from the Galleria to the Shops at Legacy has given this northern Italian restaurant a new life. Now all you need are reservations. Alas, it commits the worst sin in the restaurant world: inconsistency. 5800 Legacy Dr. 972-608-4455. \$\$. T

Nove Italiano. Despite the glitzy interior, this place is refreshingly candid and down-to-earth when it comes to the food. The kitchen, run by executive chef Chris Conlon, is content with its people-pleasing fusion of Italian-American, so long as it can throw in a little steakhouse on the side. Chicken parmigiana is a comforting monster and there is nothing dainty about the spaghetti piled high with lobster, shrimp, crabs, scallops, and calamari, in a spicy tomato sauce. Desserts are as much about form as function: interactivity and whimsy rank as highly as flavor. 3090 Olive St. 214-720-9903. \$\$\$ T

Parma Pasta & Pizza. It's not just your regular pizza and pasta joint. VJ and Ralph Muttin have taken their New York recipes and developed a regular following who flocks for generous portions of thin-crust pizza by the slice or pie and pasta dishes like chicken in white wine sauce spiked with jalapeños. 291 E. Round Grove Rd. 214-488-4447. \$.

Patrizio. The menu features all-star appetizers and a lovely grilled vegetable plate and tasty and hearty eggplant Parmesan for vegetarians. 1900 Preston Rd., Ste. 343, Plano. 972-964-2200; 25 Highland Park Village. 214-522-7878. \$-\$\$ T

Penne Pomodoro. The predictable menu includes wood-oven pizzas, Caesar salad, and fried calamari, as well as more inventive fare, such as Tuscan salad. 6815 Snider Plaza. 214-373-9911; 11661 Preston Rd. 214-368-3100. \$\$ T

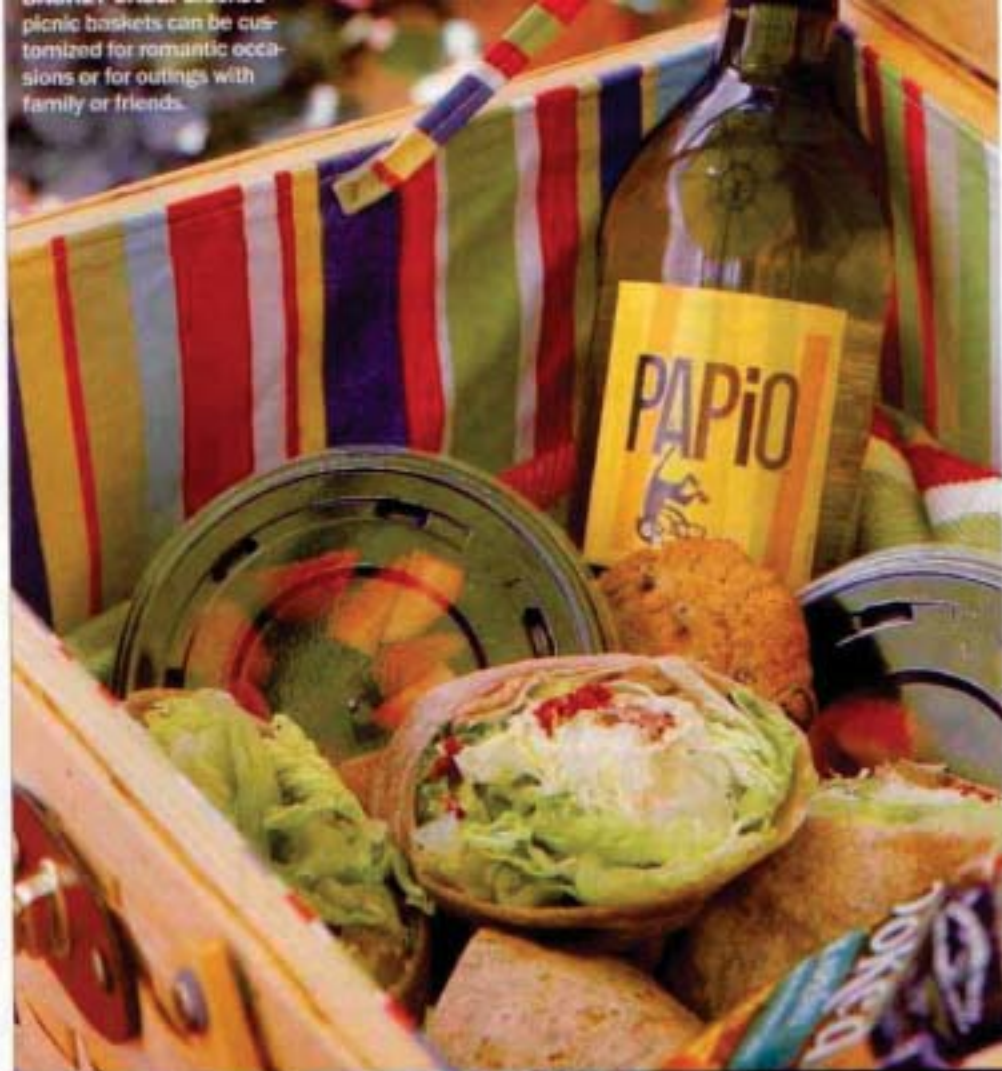
Positano. Chef-owner Antonio Avona has settled into a comfortable stride serving above-average Italian fare, including veal Marsala with wild mushroom, and orecchiette with olive oil, garlic, and broccoli rabe. Our wine for the night, recommended by the chef, had a nice price at \$36. No wonder his regulars like him so much. 18111 Preston Rd. 972-407-9180. \$\$ T

Riccardi's. Thankfully solid, classic northern Italian cuisine has returned to the Quadrangle. Owners Anita and Gaetano Riccardi are hands-on perfectionists who ensure an excellent dining experience. 2800 Routh St., Ste. 113. 214-303-0881. \$\$-\$\$\$ T

Salerno's. Cousins Mike and Morris Salerno have been serving way-above-average Italian cuisine (hint: grandma's recipes), pizza, and a knockout tiramisu since 1985. 3407 Long Prairie Rd., Flower Mound. 972-539-9534. \$-\$\$ T

Sofio's Italian Grill. The name implies Italian, but

picnic baskets can be customized for romantic occasions or for outings with family or friends.



SIDE DISH

A Tisket, A Tasket

Greenz, the salad-centric restaurant, now offers the perfect make-your-own summer picnic basket. Pick a theme—romantic, family, or friends—then pick up the phone to order a “Picnic To Go.” For \$21.99, you get a choice of two salads or wraps, fresh fruit cup, chips, and cookies. The basket will be waiting for you at one of their three locations. What’s a picnic without a bottle of wine? Not much. So choose a bottle from a nice selection of light, summery vinos. Then grab a blanket and find a shady or starry spot. 2808 McKinney Ave. 214-720-7788; 15615 Quorum Dr. 972-385-7721; 11661 Preston Rd. 214-691-7770. www.greenzsalads.com. —NANCY NICHOLS

the menu offers European-style dishes along with classic Italian specialties in a cozy atmosphere. There are fewer than 20 tables, so plan ahead. 1900 Long Prairie Rd., Ste. 108, Flower Mound. 972-691-3474. \$\$ T

Sweet Basil. For 16 years, this friendly restaurant has survived the surrounding chain mania by serving simple seafood in a relaxed setting. The crab cakes are a must. 17610 Midway Rd., Ste. 150. 972-733-1900. \$\$ T

Taverna Pizzeria and Risotteria. Even when the place is full, which is most of the time, the dining room of this wacky popular neighborhood haunt is intimate, lively, and cozy. The menu is short, safe, and affordable. Dinner entrees run about \$14.50 and top out at \$21. There is fresh focaccia and pizza from a woodstone oven, which makes it kid-friendly. Knox Village. 3210 Armstrong Ave. 214-520-9933. \$\$ T

Terilli's. Iconic Terilli, who could easily rest on her laurels as a restaurant pioneer and veteran, won't coast. After 20 years, Terilli's on Greenville has reached institution status. The wine list's been

updated, and there seems to be a renewed respect for ingredients. 2815 Greenville Ave. 214-827-3993. 4226 Preston Rd., Frisco. 214-387-4600. \$\$-\$\$\$ T

Tony's Pizza & Pasta. The menu is basic, friendly, and Italian—a nice list of baked pastas, red-sauced specialties, and nine creative twists on chicken. But the real winner here is the pizza. 10233 E. Northwest Hwy., Ste. 504. 214-503-0388. \$, BYOB.

Urbano Restaurant and Paninoteca. Dine under the stars in the cozy confines of the pretty patio. Risotto with Italian sausage or a salad topped with a shiitake mushroom fritter pair nicely with a glass of wine from the cafe's great list of half-bottles. 2533 McKinney Ave. 214-960-6911. \$-\$\$ T

Vitto Italian. Someone in the kitchen loves garlic at this cheerful Italian cafe in Bishop Arts District. The garlic bread and shrimp scampi are so slathered with the stinking rose you could fend off a vampire. This, by the way, is not an indictment. Our meals at Vitto Italian—all the usual Italian suspects—have been more than satisfying. We've just refrained from kissing for a while.