

AS SEEN IN

the

# Parklander

OCTOBER 2008

## Giovanni's Coal Fire Pizza

By Charles Marcanetti

Here we go again! First, it was a bagel place that was so much more than bagels. Next, it was a "luncheonette" that was so much more than a luncheonette. Now, we have a pizza place that not only has fantastic pizza but an elaborate, ridiculously cheap, delicious Italian menu, as well. So, why do you call it a pizza place? I know. It's because owner John Amodeo wants everyone to know that this fine eatery is casual and laid-back and begs for its customers to kick-back and eat, eat, eat. No pretense. No affectation. No gimmicks.

Giovanni's Coal Fire Pizza is located in the Waterways Shoppes on 441 in Parkland at the first traffic light north of Hillsboro Boulevard ([www.giovaniscoalfirepizza.com](http://www.giovaniscoalfirepizza.com), 954-345-9282), is open daily and offers ever-changing specials that are actually special.

We'll talk about the food and our dinner in just a moment. But check this out—they have a \$5.99 lunch special everyday from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m., that consists of a Personal Cheese Pizza, a Caesar or Italian Side Salad and a Fountain Drink. Off the menu the personal cheese pizza ALONE is \$7.95. The salad ALONE is \$8.95 (the special lunch salad is a wee bit smaller) and the Fountain Drink ALONE is \$2.50. That would be \$18.40. The special, as I said, is \$5.99. John Amodeo is out of his wonderfully generous mind. But wait, there's more! From 4-5:30 p.m. everyday, there's dinner for two at \$9.95, then there's giant pasta bowls (really giant) for \$7.95 (a buck more for meat sauce or alfredo) and it goes on and on. If the food were horrible, low prices wouldn't help. But the food is actually fun, authentic, abundant, well-presented, seasoned for most tastes, and clearly fresh. This is a "gotta-check-this-out-place." It's a must in Parkland, Coconut Creek, etc. I don't usually do this, but take a look at more of their specials:

Early Bird (4-5:30 p.m.)— And 25% off the complete menu, not "select" foods, and 25% off the entire check, not just the main dishes. On Mondays, you get ten free wings with every large pizza. On Tuesdays, you get two for one on all take-out pizzas. On Wednesdays, it's Wine Tasting. You'll get a free glass of house wine with every large pizza. Thursdays, it's two for one on the desserts. On Sundays, it's Mom's Sunday Dinner...a time for the whole family to get together, just like the old days. It is Dinner for four @ \$29.95, which includes Homemade Baked Ziti with Meatballs, Sausage and an Italian Salad and Homemade Focaccia Bread or Italian Beef Stew over Rigatoni with the Italian Salad and Homemade Focaccia Bread. Come on...Amodeo must be bonkers to offer so much that's so good for so little...but let's not ever tell him.

O . K . , now I'll talk food. Our waiter, Robert and the Manager, Joseph Scutto, lavished us with so much attention that I thought it was because they knew who we were; until I saw them and all the other wait-staff doing the same for everyone in the restaurant. Anyway, we started with (I know you know) a Montel Barolo. Not as dry as Chianti but with a great bouquet and fine legs (I wonder if a man invented that language.)

Out came Mozzarella and Tomatoes...not a stand alone item on the menu, but I wanted to taste Joe's tomatoes—locally grown in Homestead. No big deal, you say. I say you have to taste these succulent and sweet fruits (yes, fruits). Wow! We also shared the Italian Salad (\$8.95) Romaine, Tomatoes, Cucumbers, Celery, Carrots, Arugula and Olives with Homemade Balsamic Vinaigrette (for either Gorgonzola or Chicken Salad, add \$2.00). Next came the Eggplant Stack with Chilled Ricotta (\$7.95). Remarkably, the eggplant was soft but absolutely not pasty, and sweet. The ricotta nicely offsets the flavor and makes this a real nice treat...not readily available in most Italian eateries.

I had to have the Coal Roasted Chicken Wings (10 pieces/\$7.95, 20 pieces/\$13.95). Notice that the wings are roasted...not fried. They were moist, sweet, juicy, flavorful and not greasy—near perfect, actually. We also loved the San Genero Feast (\$15.95), which is a combination of jumbo cheese ravioli, meatballs and chicken parmigiana. Be hungry for this soon-to-be classic.

For our main courses we had an array of pizza...no surprise. Well, here's the surprise. Each pizza was delicious, with the cheese melted exactly how it should be melted and the sauce only sweet enough to enhance the flavor and never dominate the pie. The toppings were clearly fresh and a four minute pizza at 750 degrees is now the bellwether for all pizzas and Giovanni's Coal Fire Pizza is the bellwether for all pizzerias. Oh, I almost forgot their giant assortment of giant desserts...they just spin 'round and 'round in the display case, screaming, "Here we are, choose me...and me...and me."

Let me be clear. This is really a great place to go...alone, with a date, with your spouse, with your family, and with your friends...really...go! And soon, going will be easier. General Manager Artie Lubas, informed us that there's another Giovanni's opening in January of '09 in Sunrise. If all goes as planned, and I'm sure it will, with this fantastic model, there will be many more Giovanni's in the (near) future, and that's a very good thing.

### Giovanni's Coal Fire Pizza

Website: [www.giovaniscoalfirepizza.com](http://www.giovaniscoalfirepizza.com)

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