

Valley Life

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Sonnet di atmosfera

Visitors right at home when dining at Pino's IL Sonetto Italian restaurant

By ALICIA MORGAN
 TRIBUNE-STAR

Your order may be cooked to perfection, the wine may be the best you've tasted and the dessert unequaled, but without the right atmosphere, none of that may matter.

At Pino's IL Sonetto not only is the food top-notch, the atmosphere is warm and inviting. From your choice of authentic Italian cuisine to only the best Italian wine. From the dimly lit

BEST OF THE REST

- Jade Garden
- Nectar and Tannins
- Randall Manor Bed & Breakfast Tea Room (Dana)
- Los Tres Caminos
- Texas Roadhouse
- Mogger's Brewery

room with candlelit tables to the live music. It's why Tribune-Star readers chose Pino's as "best atmosphere" in the Wabash Valley.

"We like to feel like we've invited you over for dinner," owner Susan Monts-Bologna, says. She wants diners to feel special and wants to create an elegant but not stuffy atmosphere.

Giuseppe "Pino" Bologna opened the restaurant at 4200 S. Seventh St. in 1991. His wife, Susan, took over after his death two years ago. Pino "worked up until the end," Bologna says.

She explains Pino's IL Sonetto means Pino's Sonnet in Italian. Pino was not only a chef but a poet and songwriter also.

The knotty-pine walls are decorated with framed pictures, articles and documents that have special meaning to the family. Customers enjoy the personal connection that viewing the items gives them.

"You feel like you're walking into your home," Libby Richter says. "It's very warm — genuinely warm."

At Pino's you can expect "the ambiance of good company," former Terre Haute resident Elizabeth Meyer says.

Diners can count on soft, light music in the background.

Will Foraker and Bologna's son, Da, both recent high school graduates, perform on Friday and Saturday nights. The two have been playing together since they were 14, Foraker on the piano and Da on the bass.

"The beauty of these two is they're young," Bologna says. "They throw in a little of everything."

The two perform anything from Santana to the Beatles and even play a little Mario Bros. every once in a while, Bologna says. Kids are surprised when they hear something they know, she says.

And on certain occasions, guest musicians are invited to play with the teens, like accomplished guitar player Larry Valez.

Bill Foraker and his wife Beth Fauber dine at Pino's about once a month. "The servers are friendly and personable," he says.

And if you're not happy, they'll change it, says Barbara Ganly of Terre Haute. "It's one of our favorite places," says Ganly, who has been coming to Pino's for a long time.

Bologna asks for reservations, but doesn't require them. She doesn't want customers to have to wait. The dresscode at Pino's is business casual. Diners come dressed in anything from tuxedos to jeans and a dress shirt.

"People feel comfortable," Bologna says. Customers "walk in the door and I know who they are." Bologna says diners can pull her aside and ask for what they want. And just as if you were walking into her home, she's more than happy to oblige.



Above, customers say they feel as if they are dining at home at Pino's IL Sonetto. From the outside, the Italian restaurant looks almost like any other house on Seventh Street. At left, a group of friends chat while dining at Pino's on June 18.

Tribune-Star/
 Elizabeth Goodman

IF YOU GO

- Pino's is open from 5 to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday and from 5 to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday at 4200 S. Seventh St.
- For reservations call (812) 299-9255.



Tribune-Star/Elizabeth Goodman

Setting the mood: Will Foraker performs at the restaurant on June 18.

AT YOUR LEISURE

Gorillaz return with a follow-up to 2001 debut album and worldwide hit "Clint Eastwood." Now comes "Demon Days," with a catchy roller-skating iPod commercial attached to its first single, "Feel Good Inc."

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DON'T MISS IT!
 Thunderbirds Terre Haute Air Fair July 23-24
 TERREHAUTEAIRFAIR.COM

