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Runnemedede chef uses skills she learned in Italy

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Staff photos by Lori M. Nichols

Antionietta Romano cracks an egg into flour to prepare fresh pasta at Antonietta's in Runnemedede. At right, below, Pasta Verde, a special occasionally making its way onto the menu at Antonietta's, is a rolled spinach pasta dish with roasted peppers, mozzarella and ricotta cheeses and spinach in a cream sauce.

Antionietta Romano grew up in Avellino, Italy, surrounded by female relatives who were skilled in the art of pasta making.

In the tradition of Italian cooking, Romano was introduced to the family kitchen at an early age.

Now, as head chef at Antonietta's Bar and Restaurant in Runnemedede, Romano uses those skills to make seven varieties of pasta and countless desserts to serve to her customers.

Restaurant representative Jackie Pantaliano of ImPRessions Public Relations said Antonietta's is currently celebrating its fifth anniversary.

She said the restaurant is asking clients to "take five" during its fifth year with a \$5 off coupon towards a delicious, homemade dinner from now until Sept. 4.

"The coupon is downloadable from the website," Pantaliano said. "The restaurant will be offering different 'take five' promotions throughout the year in celebration."

Even though the restaurant has been in existence for only five years, Romano has many years of cooking experience.

"In Italy, they couldn't afford machines so they had to make everything by hand," Pantaliano said.

Romano recently demonstrated how she creates cavatelli on a flat, butcher-block table with nothing but a bowl made out of flour.

"You crack a couple eggs, pour the water in, but you don't want to put a

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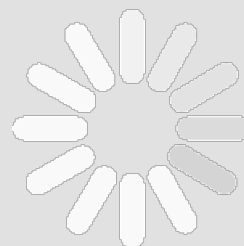


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lot of water at one time or it will get too soft," Romano said.

Once the dough is mixed, she rolls it out into long strips, cuts off small pieces and pinches them slightly to make a cavatelli. Or she takes the long, rolled strip, feeds it into a pasta maker attached to the table top, turns a handle and a textured cavatelli pops out.

"Either way, it's very labor intensive and time consuming," Pantaliano said.

Romano also grows her own tomatoes and basil for her sauces.

"Everything is fresh, homegrown and homemade," Pantaliano said.

In addition to Romano's history as a chef, the building that houses Antonietta's Bar and Restaurant has a history of its own.

Romano's business partner, Henry Marter, has owned the building for 25 years.

"It's been Freddy's Bar since 1933 and the end of prohibition," Marter said.

Freddy's was the first establishment to be issued a liquor license after alcohol was made legal again, according to Marter.

The building has also housed a pool hall, an apartment and a barber shop that closed due to a police investigation.

"In 1959, the barber was running a book," Marter said. "One day the barber shop got robbed and there were people in the chairs so he called the police. He told them they stole \$75."

Marter said when the robber was caught, he had actually acquired \$7,500 and an FBI investigation followed.

Homemade Italian dishes and stories like this and many more give the restaurant its personality and charm.

If you go: Antonietta's is located at 212 N. Black Horse Pike in Runnemedede. Hours are 4 to 10 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday and Sunday and Monday are for private parties only. Antonietta's also offers catering on site or at a different location.

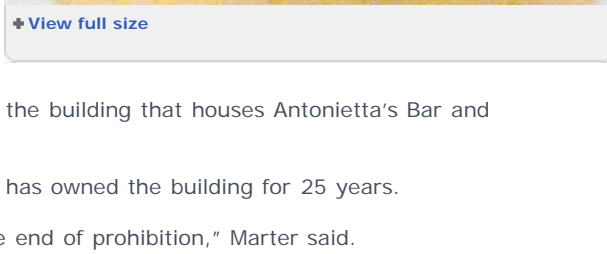
To print out the Take Five coupon, visit www.antoniettas.com.

For more information, call (856) 312-9000.

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