

## A taste of North Beach on the Avenue

When one enters Cugini's Italian Restaurant, the hosts make you feel like you are attending a family gathering. Greeting you could be Michele, Gianni, Chris or Guiseppe, three brothers and a cousin, which is where the name "Cugini" (Italian for cousin) enters the picture. These young high energetic men do the greeting, tend bar, wait on and bus tables, making sure your every need is fulfilled. Even their parents can be found in the kitchen helping to prepare food.

Michele works his share on site and is responsible for the restaurant's marketing. Gianni and Guiseppe and Chris co-manage and fill in where needed. They serve Southern Italian old family recipes from Sicily and Calabria, Italy.

Choose from a menu that lists antipasto, salads, pasta and risotto, pizza, calzones and special desserts made daily. Only high quality pasta is served, and all accompanying ingredients are housemade. One has the choice of seafood, beef, sausage or vegetarian dishes. Center of attraction is the imported wood burning oven that gives the true tradition of Italian flavor. The

most popular calzone is prepared with meatballs, tomato sauce and mozzarella cooked in the oven as are all pizzas. The spaghetti and meatballs are a favorite with the Chamber of Commerce staff.

Guests find it difficult to concentrate on conversation while watching chefs twirl pizza dough. Another favorite is the vegetarian pizza made of tomato sauce, mozzarella, fresh tomatoes, artichokes, eggplant and mushrooms.

For dessert one might order gelato, tiramisu or canoli. The bar is stocked with domestic and imported beer and wines. Above the bar reads "Amici E Vino De Vono Essere Vecchi" which one will tell you it reads "Friends and wine get better with age". The true words mean "Friends and wine must be old".

The cousins renovated and decorated the restaurant themselves. Solano Avenue is well known to the families and they feel they have brought a bit of North Beach to the Avenue. Hours are 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturday and Sunday 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. the address is 1556 Solano Ave. Phone 558-9000.