

# North End Italian finds its way to Weirs Beach, thanks to the Ray family

By ROGER AMSDEN  
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LACONIA — Faro Italian Grille, which opened in December in the former Weirs Beach Lobster Pound, is already making a name for itself with its authentic, made-from scratch Italian food which features fresh ingredients and recipes from the owner's grandmother.

A week after it opened, an enthusiastic customer who identified him-or-her self as Bumble 2249 wrote in the Winnepesaukee Forum, "Faro has set the bar for authentic Italian restaurants in the Lakes Region. Real homemade pasta. Homemade sauces. Best of the best meats, cheeses, breads and desserts! There are other good restaurants here but as far as Italian cuisine is concerned, this is it."

Those kinds of endorsements are music to the ears of Richard Ray, whose family had operated the Lobster Pound since 2007 and has operated an Italian restaurant in Boston's North End for decades.

"We saw the price the price of seafood steadily increasing and realized that we couldn't continue to offer the same kind of quality we wanted for our customers without pricing ourselves out of the market. So we decided to return to our roots and offer authentic Italian using old family recipes," says Ray, who grew up in Boston's North End just a few blocks away from Fanueil Hall.

The Lobster Pound closed on October 15 last year and an extensive remodeling was started, led by Ray's brother Mike, which saw quaint and rustic seating arrangements created, art work installed on the walls including old photos of Italian street scenes and modern works by artist Peter Max, a friend of the Ray family. The tables all feature white tablecloths and the renovations provide an intimate atmosphere which helps make the dining experience more personal and relaxing.

"Many people come in and spend two hours enjoying their meal and conversation. That's what we want for our customers. There's no sense of being hurried and we limit our servers to just three tables, so they'll always be readily available," says Ray.

He says that one popular feature so far has been



An order of chicken Parmesan and a braised lamb shank about the leave the kitchen at Faro Italian Grille, at Weirs Beach, which opened in December at the former Lobster Pound location. (Roger Amsden/ for The Laconia Daily Sun)

valet parking on Friday and Saturday nights, which customers have greatly appreciated during the cold winter nights as they can move from the warmth of their vehicle into the restaurant and then find a warm vehicle waiting for them at the front door when they leave.

"We went from a 40-year-old concept of a large volume, seafood restaurant to one which makes the dining experience very special," says Ray.

The lounge area has changed as well and offers comfortable sofa and chair seating on both sides and

ends as well as high top table seating. There are 10 flat screen LCD TVs in that area, which makes it perfect for watching sports while having pizza and calzones as well as beverages during games.

And there's a totally new menu, one which features a wide variety of choices, from the 16-inch hand tossed North End style thin crust or personal plank pizza, all made with fresh ingredients, to antipasto, salads, shrimp scampi, pepardella Bolognese, lasagna Florentine, braised lamb shank, and chicken, see next page

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