

# PIAZZANO'S

## THE "CHEERS" OF LANSING

In the 1980s, we had the TV sitcom "Cheers" and its catchphrase "where everybody knows your name!" In Lansing, we have Piazzano's – **"Where Good Friends Meet!"** Piazzano's has an atmosphere similar to "Cheers," a local bar with great customers, fantastic employees, good friends, and unbelievable food. And of course, they have their own versions of Sam, Norm, Cliff, and Carla! The name Piazzano's came from a competition with customers. Owner Jim Farhat said, "We wanted to keep the Italian theme, so when someone suggested "Paesan", which they said meant friend, comrade or countryman in Italian, it just made sense. I changed the spelling a little to bring pizza into it, and the rest is history."

Piazzano's is located **1825 North Grand River Ave.**, 3.3 miles east of the Capital Region International Airport and just west of Old Town and the Turner Dodge House at Owners of Piazzano's, Jim and Nici Farhat, have been there for almost 23 years — in fact, Nov. 23 will mark their 23rd year. They bought the restaurant from Gino Migaldi in November 1996 when it was known as Gino's.

Over the years, you may have wondered where Piazzano's was. You heard it was on Grand River, but as you drove by, you may have missed the somewhat nondescript white building. But the sign outside Piazzano's on the building told you all you needed to know: it's **"Where Good Friends Meet!"**

Now, you can't miss Piazzano's! It's been going through a major renovation with the addition of a



Before renovations



After renovations



After renovations

four-seasons room on the west side of the building. According to Jim, this will add another 30 seats, allowing the upstairs to seat 140 people and an additional 72 in the lower level banquet room.

The new renovation, along with the previous bar remodel, visually improves the exterior of the building and increases seating at just the right time. Jim Farhat is quick to thank the Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP) for its generosity by providing \$20,000 in matching funds for the renovations. As he notes, LEAP and the city of Lansing have been aiding the Lansing business community with programs and funding since 2007. And with this grant, they are now extending out into the Grand River Corridor with the Grand River Corridor Project.

Jim Farhat comes from a family steeped in the food business. His dad, Dale Farhat, owned Leon's Home Made Foods, which was on East Saginaw between Cedar and Larch Street. Leon's was famous for their deli-style salads (most notably its potato salad) and distributed and sold food to grocery stores throughout the state. Dale Farhat was also a consummate restaurateur, owning numerous restaurants over the years, like the Shingle

Shack restaurant in DeWitt and Leon's Food Shop in Lansing. He also had a hand in the food service at the Pigeon Inn (now Reno's North), Pro Bowl, the food counter at the Lansing Ski Club, and catered numerous events in the Lansing area.

Jim Farhat worked with and learned from his dad through the years. His dad instilled in him a work ethic and commitment to make only the best products, use the best ingredients, and serve the best food. Dale said, "If you focus on the food and the service, people will come." When Jim first bought the restaurant, the menu consisted primarily of burger and basket type entrees. Over time he focused on upgrading the menu, adding daily specials to the mix. You will often see Jim overseeing the window pass through, to assure every item comes out correct.



### OUR PEOPLE

All the regulars will tell you that in addition to the amazing food and friendly atmosphere, it's the staff making Piazzano's what it is today. When Jim bought Piazzano's, they had seven employees, and two are still with them today.

Jim notes that they pride themselves on their amazing staff. "They enjoy working here and it shows," he said. As an example, there are two employees, John DeMarco aka "Johnny D" behind the bar and Penny Reynolds serving the breakfast crowd. DeMarco and Reynolds started with Gino's and are still with Piazzano's giving them 24-plus years of service each. And the list of employees and their years of service include: Brian (22 yrs), Tim (12 yrs), Alyson (9 yrs), Mike L. (8 yrs), Justin (7 yrs), Tami (7 yrs), Karrie (4 yrs), Phil B. (3 yrs), Teri (3 yrs), Deanna (3 yrs), Shay (2 yrs) and our newest additions, Vern, Nick R., Larry, Molly, Nick J., Michael V., Josh, Jeff, Alysia, Phil L., Hannah, Kelvin and Shayna. "We're always looking for new employees – the next generation of amazing people who will continue making Piazzano's the best and, as always, "Where Good Friends Meet!" Jim Farhat added.

Johnny D. will tell you, he's the ringmaster behind the bar at night. He greets every customer walking through the door with "Hi folks" and thanks everyone as they leave. He credits their success to always making customer service the number one priority. It's noteworthy that DeMar-



co is the quintessential bartender – whether you're sitting at the bar having a drink or at the bar eating your meal, be sure to ask Johnny about his last film. Besides working in real estate during the day, he's also an actor and has several films to his credit. Check him out on IMDb.com, search for John DeMarco! It's very interesting to know that at one time he was even being considered for a role on the Sopranos, the HBO hit show. When you meet him, you'll understand why!

### Piazzano's hours:

Monday thru Saturday 7 am to 10 pm  
Sunday 9 am to 9 pm

### Serving Breakfast:

Monday to Friday 7 am to 11 am  
Saturday 7 am to 1 pm  
Sunday 9 am to 1 pm

Piazzano's has a traditional breakfast menu with a new menu coming soon!

Appetizers range from a variety of homemade items like pizza, Reuben, beef brisket rolls, to baked mushroom caps. Try the sandwiches, like the meatball sub, French dip, or the famous Tongue Slapper! Pizzas are all homemade and delicious, using



the freshest ingredients. Try one of the specialty pizzas, like a spinach artichoke pizza, or a unique Reuben pizza, or stay traditional with a meat lover's! Stop in on Wednesday's and try the turkey dinner special. Come early, as it often sells out.

### Some of Piazzano's Daily Specials include:

**Monday:** \$1 off spaghetti dinners

**Tuesday:** Rotation of open face shaved prime rib, meatloaf, pot roast, roast pork

**Wednesday:** Turkey dinners, homemade just the way you get at home on Thanksgiving

**Thursday:** All you can eat ground beef soft shell tacos

**Friday and Saturday:** Available after 4 - Prime Rib Dinner - the best in Lansing, hands down, slow cooked over night using only the best quality beef.

*\*Every day fresh salmon is served from the Bay of Fundy (the Bay of Fundy borders the US and Canada; Maine, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia)*

### OUR FRIENDS

As you walk in, the front door be sure to say hello to Clarence – a regular who's been hanging out for well over 25 years. Piazzano's has a ton of regulars customers. They attribute that to treating everybody like family. So, if you would like to become part of the "family" stop in and check it out. Remember to listen for Johnny D. to send out a friendly greeting. Don't forget Tuesday's DJ Trivia starts at 8 pm. Test your knowledge against the smartest people in town.