

## *Zia's Delicatessen*

This month's restaurant visit began a little differently than usual. Since Zia's is only open until 6 (5 on Saturday), we decided to do a lunch review. That meant no meeting for drinks first! So Cary Arnold (Davis Life editor), Jon Sanchez (her husband), and Ara Arrabianiniisstii (our photographer) met at Zia's at around 3 on one of the most beautiful spring afternoons we were graced with this year. It would have been lovely to sit at one of their outdoor tables, but since we were planning on trying a lot of different things, we decided it made more sense to eat in the indoor dining area.

I immediately noticed the sunny, cute, and very inviting atmosphere that is the entire small shop of Zia's. Every downtown area needs a great deli (as opposed to sandwich shops), and Zia's fits that bill. However, I quickly noticed that Zia's is much more than just a deli. With lots of pasta's, ready made sauces, and interesting condiments for sale, Zia's is the perfect place to stop and pick up the makings for a romantic (or just simple) Italian dinner. But we were here for dine in, not take out, for this purpose, so we took over two of their small dining tables and started picking our favorite deli items. For me it was a must to try pastrami on rye. Cary wanted to try several items off the menu, and we figured an assortment of other deli items such as olives, cheese platter, and salads were a must. We always try to be thorough after all!

We started with the pastrami on rye with all the fixins (mustard, mayonnaise, lettuce, pickles, tomatoes, the standards). The breads at Zia's are delivered daily from the Sciambra-Passini French bakery in Napa, the bakery they've used since day one. The rye bread was soft and flavorful, and the pastrami was sliced thin and had the perfect pastrami texture, with a hint of pepper.

The next sandwich we tried was the Grilled Prosciutto Panini, rosemary prosciutto cotto, fresh mozzarella and basil on a ciabatta roll. It always bothers Pete (who couldn't make this meal) that they call these sandwiches PANINI – which is plural in Italian – when it should be PANINO (singular) The Panini (AARGH) did not disappoint, however. The ciabatta roll was very light and perfectly toasted and all the ingredients worked wonderfully together. I think this was Cary's favorite, but honestly she seemed to love everything.

The last sandwich we tried was the Livorno. It would be best described as a caprese sandwich. Caprese, of course, is the delicious Italian salad of fresh mozzarella, tomato, basil, olive oil and salt and pepper. Well, the salad converts beautifully to a sandwich, and this sandwich would be perfect for a low-fat diet, or simply a light summer lunch. The roll was amazingly soft, and all the ingredients fresh and tasty. Jon said the roll was like a cloud. The first time he said it was off the record, but he forgot to say that the second time, so there you go!

We followed the sandwiches with a pasta salad (made with bowtie pasta), marinated mushrooms (button mushrooms in a tasty marinade), and a bean salad (made with

garbanzo and red beans). All of them very good-perfect foods for a Sunday picnic or catered lunch. The choices of condiments, pastas, antipastos, and miscellaneous holiday fixings are quite amazing. If you're looking for the perfect gift for your gourmet friends or relatives you'll find it here. The shop feels just like something you'd expect to find in Italy!

After the salads we were offered a special (made just for our tasting) cheese platter, which included brie, extremely mild and flavorful, though we didn't have time to let it reach room temperature! Also on the platter were a fontina, and a cambozola. These were served with their French bread, which as I stated earlier is very light and tasty, though a little soft for the cold cheeses. I could probably exist on their cheeses alone because all of the cheeses were among the best I've had.

Among their assorted food and beverage choices that we tried were Orange Peregrino, traditional unflavored Peregrino water, and a raspberry Italian soda. Unfortunately for me they were out of ice for my soda, but it was still the perfect compliment to an Italian deli lunch, and in fact works perfectly for an Italian deli. They don't use ice much there. Authentic much? Probably not intentional...

After we finished with our lunch foods we moved on to dessert. None of Zia's desserts are fresh made, but they do have quite the selection. They have what they term a "dessert broker" who keeps them well stocked. We let the counter person who was serving us pick his favorites. He chose several desserts from their Italian imported selections, and a local brownie. The imported desserts included the Fruit Bomba: a white chocolate coated frozen sorbet concoction, filled with passion fruit, raspberry, and mango flavored sorbets, and a Bindi frozen dessert with profiteroles smothered in milk chocolate and dark chocolate mousse. The brownie was covered in caramel and chocolate chips. All as good as they sound!

There was so much more that we wanted to try, but simply didn't have the capacity for, including the gelato, chocolate bars, many specialty sandwiches, and dishes too many to count in this article.

Kevin and Anne Crilly are the owners of Zia's. They came out to talk with us and help us with the selections during our lunch. They were both so interesting and fun to talk with that we ended up inviting them to join us on a future Davis Life dinner review. They both (along with one or two of their children) have a very "hands on" approach to the deli. In fact they told us that Friday is the only day they have extra help, which enables them to do other work for the deli. Anne and I discussed their bread selections. She told me about their searches for the perfect foods, both local and not. They insist on only the tastiest, and freshest.

The deli is open Monday through Friday, from 10 am to 6 pm, and Saturday, from 10 am to 5 pm. It can have a very long line for lunch, and when they are busy it can be hard for this mom and pop store to accommodate very many phone orders, so be patient. You'll be very pleased you did!