

SOUTH MISSISSIPPI
Living Coast Dining GUIDE

restaurant **REVIEW**

SECRET
IS IN THE

Sauce

story by **Matt Pitt**
photos by **John Stricklin**

While rounding up and thinking about this month's batch of fine restaurants, it dawned on me how much I love and admire a good sauce. Sometimes that means one that's got gusto and moxie; other times, it's the sauce's subtlety that makes it superb.

Nearly always, the most appealing sauces provide an excellent complement to whatever they top or adjoin. They draw out the flavors already present in dishes, or add a welcome dash of zest.

This month's chefs and owners have constructed a series of superlative sauces.

I tasted it at Tony's Brick Oven Pizzeria, in the way the rustic sauce moistened the freshly baked pizza crust, making it more memorable without leaving it soggy. I tasted it at Cuz's Fresh Seafood and Po'Boys, in everything from a tangy remoulade to a homemade, garlic-laced cocktail sauce. And the debris gravy at the brand-new Porter Avenue Bistro in Ocean Springs scored as well, with its rich and unique additions of drippings from the store-smoked meat. Try one of these spots in May, and get your taste buds moving!

TONY'S BRICK OVEN PIZZERIA'S
lasagna served with focaccia bread.

ON THE COVER PAGE 47
PORT AVENUE BISTRO
Oysters Galliano.



TONY'S PIZZERIA

restaurant **REVIEW** TONY'S BRICK OVEN PIZZERIA *Gulfport*

Location:

2417 14th St.,
Gulfport, MS

Hours:

Mon-Thu 11am-8:30pm
Fri-Sat 11am-10pm

Phone:

228.868.9877

With restaurants and nightlife spots opening weekly, there's a welcome scene cooking in downtown Gulfport. Now there's a new place to land a

first-class slice—making *this* Gulfport resident most delighted, indeed.

Tony's Pizzeria officially opened in March, complete with a "dough-cutting" ceremony. Co-owners Tony and Beth Swigris certainly took families into account when designing this charming, open locale: in lieu of crayons, children are presented with chunks of dough to toss, pat, and mash. Our daughter was delighted.

Still, don't kid yourself: the place does *not* solely cater to child customers. Lunch specials cater to on-the-go workers. A wine list offers two-dozen whites and reds. Brew lovers, meanwhile, can choose from 20 beers on draft (Shiner, Southern Pecan) or bottle (Negra Modelo, Moretti).

Our meal began with elegant house salads, well-stocked with romaine lettuce and spring mix, along with zucchini, carrots and olives. These were enhanced by a series of in-house dressings. The ranch held a feisty garlic tone, while the raspberry vinaigrette was tangy. Beth's Italian Parmesan creation—light and creamy—deserves special praise.

The 12-inch pies are quite economical. The four-cheese version goes for \$6.95. Patrons can build their own pie from there; each topping adds a mere buck to the bill. Toppings range from the standard to the slightly exotic. We loved our invention: hard salami along with roasted asparagus



and green peppers. For its base, Tony chose the rustic sauce. It made for a perfect pairing: the olive oil kept the fresh dough moist, but the tomato-based sauce didn't dominate, allowing us to taste nuances in flavor.

That approach carried over to our sandwich and pasta selections. Layered with sliced salami, capicola, and prosciutto and served on focaccia,

the Rustic sub delivers the richness of a muffaletta without being as bulked up on bread. The lasagna was another hearty dish with a subtle sauce. Too often, red sauces are too heavy, or overdone with garlic. Tony's versions aren't thinner—but the lighter spice content made for superb complements to all of the entrées, time and again. >>



ABOVE: RUSTIC ITALIAN layered with sliced salami, capicola and prosciutto and served on focaccia bread.

LEFT: BUILD YOUR OWN pizza at Tony's or choose from one of their specialty pizzas.

BELOW: START YOUR DINNER OFF with an elegant house salad.

