

## Avon Restaurant, Distinguished By Pianka Family Recipes And Effort, Marks First Year



HOUSE-MADE CAVATELLI with a wild boar ragu at Papacelle restaurant in Riverdale Farms in Avon. (BETTINA HANSEN, HARTFORD COURANT / November 30, 2009)

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The Pianka family stands behind what they sell, good food and fair prices at its Avon restaurant, Papacelle. Don't look for the constantly changing specials and promotions many restaurants have turned to in this economy to get people in the door. The Piankas insist they always have offered a lot for a little and continue to do so as their eatery celebrates its first anniversary.

"We buy very high-quality food. We make our sauces and pasta ourselves. Our produce and ingredients are fresh," said David Pianka, a culinary school graduate, who oversees the kitchen at the restaurant where brother Adam and mother Rose Ann pitch in. "We treat everyone as a guest in our restaurant," Pianka added. The restaurant — in the Riverdale Farms complex at 152 **Simsbury Road** (Route 10) — is easy to spot because of its distinctive fountain in the midst of the outdoor patio.

Inside, the restaurant is reminiscent of Tuscany, with warm golden hues, dark wood accents and a hand-painted mural.

The family ran a catering business in Cromwell before opening the restaurant, and many dishes on the menu are based on family recipes handed down by earlier generations who also were in the food business.

Specialties at Papacelle include a mixed fresh green salad with toasted babka, sliced apple and pumpkin honey dressing. Arugula Maltagliata pasta with tomato and tuna gravy, daily homemade ravioli, Baccala fish dredged in cornmeal, Baramundi fish filleted table-side, rabbit, Osso Buco and Venison Pot Pie are some of the specialties from the restaurant's eclectic fall/winter menu. Dinner entrees range from \$16 to \$36.

A lunch menu is also available and features salads, paninis, farancei or "starchy things" including pasta, semplice or "simple dishes" and meat dishes including tenderloin and lamb chops that range from \$6 to \$29.

On Friday and Saturday there is entertainment.

Lunch is served Monday through Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Dinner is served Monday through Thursday from 5 to 9:30 p.m. On Friday and Saturday dinner is served from 5 to 11 p.m.

Papacelle also has a bar and lounge area featuring \$5 martinis and a \$5 bar menu Monday through Friday from 4 to 7 p.m.

Call 860-269-3121 or go to [www.papacelle.com](http://www.papacelle.com) for reservations and information.

### Small Bites

River Tavern, 23 Main St., Chester, will host a champagne and oysters dinner Tuesday beginning at 6 p.m. Steve Plant of the **Noank** Oyster Co-op, Whit Davis of Stanton-Davis Farm and Donna Leszczynsky of Soelti Farm will attend. Cost is \$85 a person. Call 860-526-9417.

Avon Old Farms Inn, One Nod Road, Avon, will host a Brunch with Santa Dec. 20 from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Adults are \$24.95 and children \$14.95.

The inn also will hold a holiday buffet event Dec. 18 from 1 to 4 p.m. and from 4 to 7 p.m. The buffet will feature all-day carving, pasta and dessert station suitable for small holiday get-togethers and parties. During the evening, there also will be live music. Cost is \$13.95 a person.

Call 860-677-2818 or visit [www.avonoldfarmsinn.com](http://www.avonoldfarmsinn.com) for information and reservations.

Szechuan **Tokyo**, 1245 New Britain Ave., **West Hartford**, is expanding its jazz nights to Friday and Saturday beginning Jan. 9. Tony Allen and his Hartford combo will perform classics from their new album, "Holiday Classics," there Friday.

Named "Best of Live Jazz" in the recent "Best Of" poll in Connecticut Magazine, Szechuan Tokyo also is offering a Moo Jew **comedy** show Dec. 24 to 27 at 7:30 p.m.

The comedy dinner show will feature comedians Ophira Eisenberg, Myq Kaplan, Dan Shaki and Jason Lorber. Tickets are \$49 a person and include a four-course dinner and all the comedy you can eat.

Call 802-863-5966 or go to [www.moojew.com](http://www.moojew.com) for information and reservations.

Pollo Tropicale, 475 **Flatbush** Ave., Hartford, is offering a \$5 complimentary gift certificate with every \$25 gift card purchased during the holiday season. Every \$50 gift card purchase will include a \$10 gift certificate.

Catering orders exceeding \$100 will receive a 10 percent discount during the holidays, and gift certificates can be used toward the cost. Call 860-218-9492 for information.

The Bee and Thistle Inn, 100 Lyme St., **Old Lyme**, is offering Victorian Afternoon Tea on Wednesday through Saturday from noon to 3 p.m. The tea features music by harpist Faith Leimer and refreshments. Cost is \$35 a person. Call 860-434-1667 for information.

A Christmas dinner show titled "Christmas in Connecticut" will be performed Friday at The Skyline Restaurant, 106 **Ella Grasso** Turnpike, **Windsor Locks**, Friday beginning at 6 p.m. with cocktails. The show will benefit the Sgt. **Richard Ford** Scholarship Fund. Ford died in Iraq in 2007.

Cost is \$35 a person and includes dinner and the musical show. Call 860-623-9296 for reservations.

Max Downtown, 185 Asylum St., Hartford, will be open **Christmas Eve**, for lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and for dinner from 4:30 p.m. Call 860-522-2530 for reservations.

Flemings Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar, 44 South Main St., West Hartford, is offering several holiday specials. Diners who make online reservations through Dec. 30 will receive a \$25 dining credit and a bonus card that can be used during 2010. Reservations must be made by going to [FlemingsSteakhouse.com](http://FlemingsSteakhouse.com) and clicking the "Reserve Now" link in the promotional box.

Fleming's also is offering a three-course dinner for two for \$99 featuring twin ocean point lobster tails through Tuesday. Diners can choose a lobster tail paired with filet mignon. The restaurant is also offering a wine special through Dec. 31: a bottle of 2004 Silver Oak Napa Valley Cabernet for \$125.

The restaurant also is giving a \$20 bonus card with every \$100 spent on gift cards. Bonus must be used between Jan. 1 and Feb. 10. Call 860-676-9463 for reservations and information.

Burtons Grill, 100 Evergreen Way, **South Windsor**, is sponsoring its second annual "Angels & Elves" program benefiting the Hockanum Valley Community Council's Tri-Town Food Pantry. Diners are asked to make any contribution to be an "elf" or a \$50 contribution to be an "angel," with donations used for holiday foods and other needs.

The Mill at 2T, 2 Tunxis Road, Tariffville, will host a six-course Harpoon Beer Dinner Monday. Tickets are \$65 a person plus tax and tip. Call 860-658-7890 for reservations and information.

• Send items for A La Carte 14 days in advance to MaryEllen Fillo at [fillo@courant.com](mailto:fillo@courant.com), or call 860-241-3717, or mail them to her at the Hartford Courant, Features Department, 285 Broad St., Hartford, CT 06115.

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