



Pizza, A Gettysburg Tradition

Pizza. Sometimes, that's all that needs to be said. A one word food, a one word statement. Gettysburg has the luxury of having some great pizza places to choose from. Two of these establishments have a rich history in Gettysburg.

When Thomas "Tommy" Kranias first came to America, Ellis Island to be exact, in 1951 he was 21 years old and spoke not a word of English. His Uncle Ernie (I think you know where that story leads) brought him here from Greece to afford him a better way of life. Under Uncle Ernie's tutelage at the hot dog shop, Tommy was a hard worker, learned to speak and write in English, made many friends and married a local Biglerville gal named Nancy.

Tommy's Pizza first opened in the former railroad station on North Washington Street, in 1973. I remember that location well. Whether we ate in or carried out, I would gravitate to the jukebox and hope that we had enough time to listen to a few songs. In 1987 Tommy sold the railroad station to the Gettysburg College and moved the operation to its current location at 105 Steinwehr Ave. Ownership passed to Tommy's daughter Cathy and her husband in 1995. Tommy passed away suddenly in 1999 and ownership has stayed in the family with Tommy's grandsons, Drew and Wade Leedy, as the current proprietors.

Mamma Ventura became a Gettysburg staple when Carmelo Fazzolari moved to Gettysburg in 1977. He first opened his pizza shop on York Street (currently Starbucks). In 1982 a fire swept through what is now The Gettysburg Hotel, which was used as an apartment building back then, and that structure sat in hollowed ruins for 8 years. The Gettysburg College purchased and restored the building and the grand hotel was operational again in 1990. Having to relocate due to the changes, Carmelo purchased 13 Chambersburg Street and moved the pizza shop to its current location.

What was once a pizza shop then evolved into Mamma Ventura Casual Italian Dining, a more upscale dining experience with authentic Italian cuisine. Carmelo suddenly passed in 2003 and his wife Jackie and daughter Cristina have carried on the family business. The restaurant offers a spacious banquet room for wedding parties, anniversaries, birthdays and other intimate events. Cristina, a graduate of the Cordon Bleu School in Pittsburgh, specializes in the creation of the incredible desserts that are offered.

Two families. Two restaurants. Two dreams. Two Gettysburg traditions. Dine in is offered at both, and if you're not comfortable with that yet, both offer take out as well. Stay local, shop local and help support family dreams. It's what helps them become Gettysburg traditions. Visit www.gettysburgretailmerchants.com for a list of all of our GARMA retailers.

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