

# New Palumbo's location tastes like tradition, and for cheap



The Palumbos have been in the pizza business in Naples for 20 years.

And it shows.

The [new East Naples Palumbo's Pizzeria](#) that opened three months ago off Collier Boulevard and Grand Lely Drive was slammed on a recent Friday evening visit. Customers lined the bar on stools under frosted hanging lights, packed the outdoor patio and crowded around the tables and booths inside a snug black-and-white, diner-style restaurant.

It's the kind of place where diners fold their New York-style slices in half, and my Midwestern roots shuddered.

Canvassed black-and-white photographs hung from the wall — 1950s-era birthday parties and family gatherings that could have been scenes straight out of "The Godfather."

Inside a chilled front counter, Italian treats triggered my sweet tooth and I couldn't wait for dessert — miniature cream puffs, cocoa powder-dusted tiramisu, cheesecake and cannolis.

The only table available was near the front windows, and my party of three even had to wait a few minutes. It was hot. An air conditioner was either out of commission or failed to keep up with the ovens and crowd of people streaming in and out of the door to fetch pick-up orders. Luckily a waitress fetched a canister of iced water and small glasses as soon as we sat down, but it still didn't keep the sweat at bay.

This is the second location of [Palumbo's Pizzeria](#). The first still stands on the northeast corner of Pine Ridge and Livingston roads in North Naples. But this new pizzeria sits conveniently between the entrances to the major residential communities of Lely Resort and VeronaWalk, so business has been good.

And it was very good on that Friday night.

We ordered garlic knots (\$3.95) to start our meal. Six of them came plated around a small bowl of marina sauce. They were nicely crispy on the outside and soft on the inside, dripping with melted butter and bits of Parmesan and garlic. I actually wouldn't have minded more garlic.

For less than \$4, it was money entirely well spent.

For dinner we ordered two 12-inch pies, a specialty "chicken parm" on the thin-crust New York-style (\$14.95), and a half cheese, half meat lovers on the thick-crust Sicilian-style.

The waitress said, "That's a lot of food."

The chicken parm pizza came with a small layer of sauce, breaded chicken bits and topped with mozzarella cheese. It tasted exactly as you'd imagine, and I enjoyed it. The crust was cracker thin, but was never soggy. The chicken was a little overdone since it's twice baked, so on a second visit I would ask the cooks to take it out of the oven a little early.

The Sicilian crusts are prepared each morning at the pizzeria, allowing them to rise and par-bake, almost like a focaccia bread. The rectangular-shaped pie was sliced into six large rectangles.

Pepperoni, sausage crumbles, ham squares and slices of peppery meatball crowded the meat lovers half. Maybe the waitress was right. It was a lot of food.

For dessert we ordered an assortment of regular cream puffs and ones topped with chocolate. They're priced at \$4.95. The chocolate was our favorite because of the pudding-like vanilla filling. The plain ones were a little on the dry side.

A chocolate cannoli (\$4.95) came to the table with a chocolate, flaky shell and ricotta filling laced with tiny chocolate chips. A dusting of powdered sugar completed the ensemble, and we somehow found the room to finish it off. It was worth the trouble. I could have eaten the ricotta with a spoon.

Service was friendly but sparse. A packed dining room kept our waitress busy; we were there for about an hour and a half, and in the heat, our dining experience was a little miserable.

We decided to try a second visit because the first one was just so uncomfortably hot, and a Saturday lunchtime visit proved much cooler. This time, though, the restaurant was nearly empty, and service was much better.

My lunch date ordered a pepperoni roll (\$8.95), which was a massive hunk of dough cut in half and filled with slices of pepperoni, mozzarella and romano cheeses. It also came served with a side of marina for dipping. It was a little greasy, which was to be expected.

I could say the same for my half of a meatball Parmagiana (\$5.95). The bread was on the hard side of crunchy, so I would have appreciated more sauce.

The second visit was entirely worth it, though, for the slice of house-made tiramisu. Unlike most phony tiramisus that substitute coffee-soaked lady fingers with cake layers, this one was traditional. It wasn't overly sweet and the coffee flavor came through strong. We ate every last bite of the giant cake, even scraping the plate for more whipped mascarpone.

After 20 years in business, Palumbo's has pizza (and tiramisu) figured out. A few items stood out, but it's the reasonable price that would make me go back.

Palumbo's Pizzeria

**Where:** 7711 Collier Blvd., East Naples

**Information:** [palumbosnaples.com](http://palumbosnaples.com); palumbosnaples@gmail.com; 239-431-7688

**Hours:** 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily

**Prices:** Appetizers \$3.95-\$11.95; Cold subs \$5.95-\$11.95; Hot subs \$5.95-\$11.95; Pizza \$11.95-\$17.95; Calzone \$8.95-\$9.95; Dinners \$11.95-\$14.95; Sunday gravy for two \$24.95; Desserts \$3.95-\$6.95

**Forks:** Three and a half out of five