

The Villa Coffee aims to please patrons

SECOND HELPING WITH JOSHUA MALONI
GM/Managing Editor

When people say, “customer service,” they’re often referring to the level of attentiveness and politeness encountered when patronizing a business.

For new The Villa Coffee House proprietor and chef Vinnie Pallaci, the principle is slightly different.

“If something’s wrong, I’ll fix it for you,” he said. “I want nothing but you to have a great experience here. It’s my goal. That’s what I wanted in owning a business.”

In fact, “Tell us if something’s wrong; we’ll fix it for you,” he stressed. “We don’t want you to leave with a bad experience whatsoever. So, our goal is to make you happy one way or another.”

The idea behind Pallaci’s policy is simple: “Just seeing the enjoyment from people enjoying your food, and saying they thoroughly enjoyed what you prepared is



something I really strive for,” he said. “I feel someone going out and spending money on a meal, you want something that’s quality. And I really take pride in that aspect of it, and enjoy putting out quality food.”

In April, Pallaci took over as owner of the eating establishment long known as “Tom George’s.” The restaurant was recently run by Stephen Pusateri, who sold it and opened Bistro Avera on Center Street.

Villa Coffee serves lunch but is famous for its breakfast menu. The site continues to be a popular meeting place for locals, especially on weekend mornings.

“We don’t cut corners. ... We get the best bacon. We get nothing but the cage-free eggs,” Pallaci said.

He explained the key to serving a winning breakfast is “Just knowing what you’re looking for in the product, when you’re cooking it – and at a fast rate, because this place packs. ...

“You lose the product fast. Your eggs, you lose real fast, and your toast – because who wants cold toast? You’ve got to make sure everything (works) – that’s the difference.”

“I come from a dinner background, myself. So, this is like a whole new world in that aspect, where it’s totally different timing. Especially when you’re cooking with someone else, you both have to have your product ready to go out at that table at the same time, so you’re both hot and ready to go, because that window of toast being warm, like I said, is real short.”

Pallaci was a longtime chef and desert maker at the iconic Schimmschack’s Restaurant. He didn’t intend to work in the kitchen but, once he found himself on the line, “I just had a love for it,” he said. “I went to school for it; I’ve been to Italy, spent a summer in Italy, apprenticing. So, it’s just something I’ve always had a passion for.”



The Villa Coffee House owner and chef Vinnie Pallaci is shown in his restaurant at 769 Cayuga St., Lewiston. • The Villa Coffee House breakfast photos courtesy of the Pallaci family.

The Niagara Falls native also worked for the Brickyard family of restaurants – and that’s where he first met Pusateri.

Pallaci also has a history with Villa Coffee.

“My grandfather used to take me. He lived in Lewiston when I was a child, so we used to come here and eat quite often. So, I knew of the Tommy George days,” Pallaci said.

Though he has a passion for cooking, it was right around the time of the pandemic when Pallaci found himself “burned out with the business.”

“The long hours and missing things to do with my children,” became troublesome. So, “I went into construction. My family has a heating and cooling business, hanging duct work and such – Ventry’s – so, I did that for a while as a 9 to 5. My weekends were clear, so it just fit better for my lifestyle and the age my kids are. They’re in high school right now. At that point, they were kind of middle school and still young, so I didn’t want to miss every soccer game. I didn’t want to miss every birthday.”

“I got out of the business – but I missed it.”

Fortunately, “A buddy of mine found out that this place was for sale,” Pallaci said. “It seemed perfect for me, and what I want out of life. Now, I can get out at a reasonable time and still catch my kids’ games.”



“So, I am doing what I love. I’m cooking and doing what I love to do, and I get to be a part of my kids’ lives.”

“And then, once they graduate in a couple years, maybe I want to start doing dinners or something of that nature. You know, at that point, I’ll have a few years under my belt here, because I’ve always done the back of the house. I’ve never done the front of the house. It’s a learning curve for me to do that part, too.”

“But, ultimately, I want to put out great food; you know, keep the customers happy with the staple dishes that they love: the mixed eggs, the pancakes that we’re known for. So, I’m not going to fix stuff that’s not broken, and I’ll just keep playing with the menu and adding some other favorites.”

Pallaci said his sausage gravy and breakfast pizza dishes have become popular with patrons. He said he hopes to add soups, pies and other desserts to the menu this fall.

“Please come try us out, if you haven’t,” Pallaci said. “If you have and you’ve come back, we appreciate it. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out.”

“We want to be someone that interacts with the public because Lewiston is such a small town. So, via Facebook, tell us if you had a problem – or if you enjoyed something and you want to see more of anything. Suggestion for a special – you know, ‘I’d really like to see a tuna sandwich,’ or something.”

Villa Coffee is located at 769 Cayuga St., Lewiston; and online at <https://www.thelewistonvilla.com/>. Hours of operation are 7:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

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