

PIZZA OF THE WEEK: Piatti in Mill Valley

By Michael Bauer

CHRONICLE RESTAURANT CRITIC

Piatti is a popular Italian restaurant, with several locations around California. While all have the same basic style, the look and some of the dishes change depending on the chef and the location.

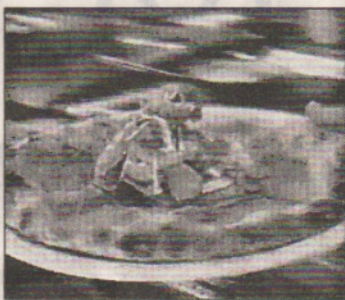
At the Mill Valley outpost, the secret weapon is the pizza; I was surprised how good it is. The wood-burning oven produces a blistered crust balanced with the toppings. The leftovers were almost as good the next day.

The stylish restaurant features an open kitchen with the oven in the corner and with a wall of windows overlooking Shelter Bay, giving the space a resort-like feel. It's a great setting for a full meal, but I'd go there just for the pizza.

Size: 10 inches (\$11.50-13.50).

Style: Neapolitan.

Oven: The wood-burning oven fires the pizza at about 800 degrees for about 2-3 minutes.



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Crust: Thin-crust pizza made with high-protein flour, which can be stretched extra-thin, producing a puffy, lightly blistered edge.

Pizza tried: The salsicce is finely ground spicy sausage with tomato sauce flavored with garlic. It's enhanced with red and yellow roasted peppers and pecorino cheese. The blistered, golden crust still shines through judiciously applied toppings.

We also tried the pesto pizza, which is an imaginative and stellar blend of pesto, grilled asparagus, grilled onions and big puddles of lemon ricotta — a combination that tastes like spring.

Other toppings: Four daily pizzas offered, including the Bianca, with mozzarella, red onions, rosemary, prosciutto and arugula, and the classic Margherita.

Additions: None.

Anything but pizza: This full-service restaurant offers a dozen appetizers, salads and crudos; 11 pastas and a half-dozen main courses, including chicken under a brick and grilled salmon.

Vitals: 625 Redwood Hwy., Mill Valley; (415) 380-2525 or www.piatti.com/local.html.

Lunch, dinner daily. Takeout available.