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Modern, New Rochelle's beloved pizza joint, moved this past winter from cramped quarters to a lofty space that was first a car showroom and later a restaurant supply store. As recorded on various social media sites, loyal patrons were variously elated and scandalized. But no one can dispute that the new home of this Italian-American emporium — with its vaulted ceiling, giant arched windows and granite floor — is a knockout.

You can get your expectations up. The valet parking, the glamorous room, the bustling bar, the swell soundtrack, the curvy banquettes — all conspire to make you feel like a million bucks. As one guest noted metaphorically, "The temperature is just right." (If only diners dressed

for the occasion; the cargo shorts and T-shirts many wore seemed wrong for the place.)

Service at Modern, owned and managed by two cousins, Anthony Russo and Sebastian Aliberti, is top-notch: on our first visit, our waiter, decked out as if for prom night in black shirt and shiny pink tie, promptly offered to fetch drinks; his attentiveness never flagged. At a long table behind us, an extended family celebrated a young man's Confirmation (we overheard the toast); nearby, five stocky guys took delivery on enough food — I have never seen a bigger pork chop in my life — to feed themselves and five more.

The expanded menu is a marvel of excess. From baked clams oreganata (made with freshly shucked clams) and scungilli in marinara to spaghetti carbonara and a \$38 rack of lamb, the long march of dishes brought to mind my favorite local Columbus Day parade, with its resplendent priests, gleaming dump truck aflutter with tiny tricolore and loaded with Little Leaguers, and buffed Ferraris tied with red and green balloons.

Modern takes special pride in its brick-oven pizzas and calzones. A snappy customized pie with mushrooms and prosciutto (not listed as a topping — you have to ask for it) and drizzled with balsamic vinegar was one of the best things we ate. On a split pie, the margherita half, with pools of fresh mozzarella, was better than the half devoted to sausage, onions and peppers, which was somewhat soggy.



To start, I loved my big stuffed artichoke afloat in chicken broth, straight from a Roman trattoria. Mozzarella sticks were "killer," in the words of the young man who had to have them. Crunchy popcorn shrimp were just what you'd expect, with that deep-fried deliciousness that always wins the popularity contest.



Fresh mozzarella with sliced tomatoes and roasted red peppers, a lightly dressed Caesar salad, gnocchi with homey Bolognese, and sharp spaghetti puttanesca were all perfectly good, as were entrees of garlicky shrimp scampi and chicken Marsala (entrees come with a crisp house salad dotted with fat black olives and underripe pear tomatoes and a side of spaghetti or French fries).

For dessert, we fell for the assortment of traditional layer cakes, with their boozy fillings and gobs of whipped cream, in flavors like lemon mascarpone, tiramisù and strawberry shortcake. One night, a homemade chocolate layer cake ("made by an old lady," according to our waiter) caused a full-blown turf battle, forks clashing to the last bite.