

# Be Transported to Italy With Mariano's Authentic Abbondanza-is-good Fare!

By Janet Bohling

**PEPPERELL** - If you're looking for real authentic Italian...those simple, perfectly fresh plates of pure joy you thought you could only find in the North End of Boston...well think again, because they can indeed be found locally...right here in Pepperell.

Enter Al and Pam Mariano, owners of Mariano's Ristorante in Pepperell, MA. Al and Pam opened the ristorante 2 years ago and Mariano's is their first culinary expression of their passion for food and people. The inspiration for Mariano's came from Al's Italian heritage and in particular his Grandmother Nannie, who came from Calabria, Italy. Calabria is at the toe of the boot, the extreme south, and is famous for its scorching heat. It's no wonder that Mariano's has heated up this quaint little town with its transporting flavors such as the famous Mariano meatball. The recipe is directly from Nannie's kitchen so I had to try them. What I got was hefty looking meatballs in all their glory, with a rich meaty flavor, slightly seasoned, and so tender I easily slid my spoon right through them. So utterly spectacular, and definitely worthy of the true Italian name...meat-a-ball!

As much as I love the Mariano meat-a-ball, my all time favorite dish is the Ala Vodka. I have ordered it several times. It's rich and creamy and has a flavor so outrageously good, I had to ask the waitress, "Is there bacon in this?" Of course, there isn't any bacon in Ala Vodka. I just couldn't image anything this wonderful without the use of my #1 favorite ingredient. At Mariano's, Ala Vodka is a masterful combination of shallots, prosciutto, basil, peas, crème, tomato and of course vodka...who wood-a thunk. You have to try it!



Mariano's certainly proves that their wood-fired brick oven has many other uses, but it was indeed crafted for pizza. This is pie on flavor steroids and is a melt-in-your-mouth marvel. Order the traditional pizza with your choice of toppings or go with one of Chef Richard's brilliant gourmet creations. It doesn't matter because they all offer that much desired bubbled crispy crust, soft center, with flavors that keep you reaching for another slice well past the point of full, or even sanity. It's no wonder that Mariano's won the coveted place of being in the top 5 places to have pizza in Central Massachusetts by mavacations.com.

The atmosphere of Mariano's has an elegant yet slightly rustic look, which is warmed by its wood-fired brick oven and feels a little like coming home...all of which is reflective of Pam's personality and heart. As a patron, I felt as if I walked directly into Pam's home and sat as a family member in her dining room. I am not alone in that feeling. Many have told me they not only patronize Mariano's for its incredibly delicious food, but for its warm family hometown atmosphere. Seating is offered 3 ways: you can be served at the bar in close proximity to Chef Richard, at one of Mariano's white clothed tables, or during the summer enjoy the al fresco feel and people watch at one of their outdoor tomato red umbrella tables.

In most every Italian home Christmas is a very special time. Indeed, it is so with Mariano's. They have a full catering menu and will customize any dish. And now until the end of December Mariano's will give you a FREE \$20 dollar gift card with your purchase of four gift cards, or a \$100 or more catering order. It's their gift to you! (Limited time offer). All in all, Mariano's is an asset to the community and well worth traveling for, if you don't live in Pepperell. *To learn more about Mariano's Ristorante go to: [marianositalian.com](http://marianositalian.com). See their front page ad!*

## UPCOMING DECEMBER EVENTS

Go to [thinklocalpepperell.com](http://thinklocalpepperell.com) & send us your **special events** for consideration in our calendar.

### PEPPERELL

4th Annual tree lighting, 6:45pm  
The Lawrence Library

12th Veterans Breakfast, 8:30 AM  
Pepperell VFW

### DUNSTABLE

1st Santa Arrives, Noon -1pm

1st-31st Holiday Book Sale  
During regular Library hours  
Dunstable Public Library

### TOWNSEND

5th Townsend Holiday Fair & Festival  
of Trees, 10:00 am- 3:00 pm  
Townsend Library & Meeting Hall

13th Homemade Christmas Cookie  
Walk, 8:00am to 1:00pm  
St. John the Evangelist

### AYER

Ayer Police Department Toy Drive  
Ongoing through December 23

21st Yuletide Celebration, 1pm - 4pm  
Ayer Town Hall

### SHIRLEY

20th Shirley Community Christmas  
Concert  
A benefit for Loaves and Fishes  
Ayer/Shirley Middle School

*Merry Christmas*

May your holiday be merry & your families be blessed!