

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2011

## Nky's Best Pizza Quest: Buona Vita

Our fourth stop for Nky's Best Pizza Quest was Buona Vita, located on Fairfield Ave. It's a bit past the Bellevue Business district in Dayton. We had high expectations for this stop on the quest, as it was one of the pizza locales highlighted in Cincinnati Magazine's best pizza article. Word of mouth also holds this eatery in high regards as well.

You get a break from seeing my mug in video form for this review, as our forgetful-faithful leader didn't bring the company iPad.

### Atmosphere (1-10 scale): 8

The older buildings on Fairfield Avenue lend themselves perfectly to the small business district. Buona Vita is no different. In what used to be a bank, the owners have made it feel intimate and done a good job incorporating some of the features that make it a unique place to dine.

I made a reservation for 8 at 7:00 and it was a good thing I did. The place was packed on a Tuesday night, a mostly older crowd. There were no specials that we were aware of, so obviously business is going well. Our reservation placard greeted us shortly after our server and we were off.

The lighting was a bit dark in the main dining area, but that seemed to be the only thing we could nitpick. We arrived a little late to find the kids we were with playing on what looked to be a small stage in the corner. Didn't ask, but it would be perfect for a one to two person band. We took a tour of the smaller restaurant. The bar was well stocked and lead to a vault with a 12 inch steel door. (Below)



A tip: if you are with a group of 2-6, call ahead and try to reserve the "nook," which is a hollowed out vault, which is definitely the coolest table in the restaurant. You are totally secluded though, so if people watching is your thing, look elsewhere (below):



### Overall Pizza Taste/Selection: 8.3

All of the recipes at Buona Vita have been handed down from generation to generation. The dough, sauce, sausage and meatballs... everything. The dough is made fresh daily, not frozen. Add the stone oven, and you have a pizza that's built on a thin hand-tossed crust, which gets a little charred on the bottom, a little puffy on the edges, with a slightly shiny brown glaze.

The ingredients are fresh, but not over weighted. It's a wonderful blend and take on the old Italian type of pizza.

We had the standard Pepperoni, Jeremy's Meat Pie (pepperoni, sausage, bacon) and Pewee's Pizza Bianco (topped with oil, Italian spices, cheese and spinach (below):



Very, very good pizza.

Again, with 10 people and after our appetizers we only had a few pieces left.

**Extras: 8**

A really neat part of Buona Vita is laid out on the menu. The "family" theme is displayed throughout by way of what each item is called. You don't just see breadsticks, salads or calzones. You have Big Nikki's Breadsticks, Grandma Frommeyer's Salads and Uncle Carmine's Calzones.

We tried Little Joey's Cheese Filled Breadsticks with a side of calabrese dip. The dip added a little taco-dip-style zing which complemented the buttery crust of the bread and the zestfulness of the cheese.

For dessert we had a plate of Nonna's Dolci (Sweets). All were reasonably priced (either .50 or .75 per cookie). We tried the pizzelle (vanilla waffle cookies), Amaretti (almond cookie) and the Chocolate Meringues. My favorite were the meringues, but don't make the mistake I made by trying to split it in half. There will be an explosion of chocolate all over your hands. Amazing.

There are a few daily specials which include the Fireman's Special (half a pizza and a drink) for \$8.99.

**Service: 8.3**

The menu again tells the story here. Flip it to the back and you'll see the Frommeyer clan posing together in a family candid. Look a little closer and you'll notice that one of the people in the picture is your server, another is pouring your cocktails and still another is cruising the dining room working in a manager's role that evening.

Working in a family business myself, I know that when your name is on the marquis you'll work just a little bit harder, do a little bit more and actually take pride in your work because it's not just your work... it's your name.

They did not disappoint here. They even gave the engaged couple at the table a tour of their rehearsal dinner spot (below):



Total Score: 8.15

Going to be tough to beat Buona Vita. Can't wait to try to find one, though.

**Running Tally:**

- 1) Buona Vita - 8.15
- 2) Newport Pizza Company - 8
- 3) Dewey's Pizza - 6.15
- 4) Fort Thomas Pizza - 5.375