

Pasta dishes pop up at Sidebar meals around Columbia

By Ivy Hettinger-Roberts

The upstairs area of DrinKraft had an air of Italy on Friday, decorated with tablecloths the colors of the Italian flag, Frank Sinatra playing from the speaker, an apron that said "Recipe? What recipe? I'm Italian!" and of course, trays of homemade lasagna.

The lasagna was the centerpiece of Shelly La Fata's pop-up restaurant, Sidebar Pop Ups by Pasta La Fata, at an event from 3 to 7 p.m. on Friday at DrinKraft.

In addition to lasagna, La Fata also served salad, Italian cookies and focaccia bread.

La Fata's family is Sicilian, but she taught herself to make pasta from scratch. She spent last January in Italy, where she rented a car and drove solo around the country.

"I was trying to discover varieties of pasta and methods of making pasta that aren't being done here, and there's a lot of that," La Fata said. "I mean, the small towns are so isolated. Each town has their own style and type, and some of them are becoming endangered, because there's only like one or two old women still making it."

Most of her dishes focus on vegetables, the result of attending what she calls a "plant-based" culinary school in Austin, Texas.

"Most of the stuff I do celebrates plants," La Fata said.

When she has meat options, she makes sure to buy the pork, chicken or beef from local farmers.

"The only way these menus get planned is conversations with local farmers," La Fata said. "I wouldn't do this without them. They're my inspiration."

Right now, her favorite pasta to make is cavatelli, which means "little hollows" in Italian. A recipe that uses ricotta cheese instead of eggs, La Fata described them as looking like "ribbed tiny hot dog buns."

On Saturdays, La Fata sells her pasta at the Columbia Farmers' Market.

Sidebar, the pop-up pasta restaurant, started in 2016 and travels to different locations around Columbia.

La Fata likes to keep customers on their toes in planning Sidebar's future pop-ups, she said, to help her sell all the food she makes.

"It's not something you can get every day," she said. "(People) have no idea when they'll get this lasagna again."

Ann McGinity is a recent regular. It's her third time eating at Sidebar, and she said it's "worth having often."

While McGinity enjoyed the salad at Friday's pop-up, she is also a fan of La Fata's toasted raviolis — the headliner of upcoming Feb. 5 event at Pizza Tree.

"I didn't understand them until I had hers," McGinity said of toasted ravioli. "I haven't been this excited about anything in a long time."

The toasted raviolis are usually "whimsically large," according to La Fata, but she said the ones at Pizza Tree will be the classic size.

Sidebar will have another pop-up before the February event, though La Fata had not decided when or where.

The events are posted on Sidebar's Facebook or Instagram page.

Link to article on the Missourian website:

https://www.columbiamissourian.com/news/local/pasta-dishes-pop-up-at-sidebar-meals-around-columbia/article_624ca6e0-1b7d-11e9-9a32-e360877682ae.html