

Anthony & Sons Bakery in Denville: Hard to find, easy to swallow

Published: Thursday, February 24, 2011, 11:57 AM Updated: Thursday, February 24, 2011, 11:59 AM



By **Brooke Tarabour/For The Star-Ledger**



JERRY MCCREA/THE STAR-LEDGER

Roseanne Dellemonache, assistant manager at Anthony & Sons, reads freshly-baked loaves at the factory's store in Denville.

Off the beaten track is one thing; hidden is quite another. That's what I think as I drive back and forth through downtown Denville until I finally spot a CVS and a TD Bank. Aha! My friend Lenny Torine had told me to turn at that corner and go up a long, winding hill until I came to a huge building. That would be Anthony & Sons Bakery.

The first thing I notice is the trucks. There's got to be about 50, in all sizes. Considering we're visiting on a weekday, I wonder how many others were already on the road.

Anthony & Sons bakes and sells bread. So here on Luger Road, it's a manufacturing plant, a bakery, a market, a prepared foods shop and a pretty

Tuscan-style cafe where you can sit down and eat all this good food. Considering how busy this out-of-the-way place is, I figure people found it just like I did: Someone told them all about it.

Anthony Dattolo started it all in 1984 when he opened a wholesale bread bakery in Fairfield. He had come to America from Sicily in 1952 knowing no one, not understanding a word anyone said, and with only \$2 in his pocket.

He landed in Brooklyn in a strong Italian neighborhood, worked odd jobs in restaurants and bakeries, and learned to bake bread. He married a Brooklyn beauty named Rosalia and passed his skills on to sons Baldo, now president and Joseph, senior vice president. Anthony says he's retired, but you never know when he'll show up.

After running out of space 10 years ago, the company moved to Denville, designing a 60,000-square-foot building that can only be described as an amusement park for bread. The entire back wall of the shop is glass, and you can watch rolls moving around and around up to 20 levels high until they're baked and fed, piping hot, onto one of a dozen ramps moving around the state-of-the-art facility. The loaves, rounds, baguettes and other varieties travel on conveyor belts through fun house-like tunnels, and up and down ramps until they're ready for the shop or the trucks. Wholesale is the heart of the business, but buying bread retail here is a treat — and a bargain.

On our first visit, I wanted to try a round roll, and the sweet young man behind the counter asked if I



could wait a minute. Going back into the plant, he grabbed one fresh from its complicated journey and told me to wait a minute before biting — it was that hot.

Head baker Vincenzo DiBella is responsible for the quality, and although I'm not sure we can thank him for the prices, we will anyway. Huge Italian, kaiser, sub, whole wheat, and regular ciabatta rolls are 39 cents each; onion Tuscan is 49 cents, and a delicious multigrain with sunflower seeds and oats costs 59 cents.

Round pizza breads, "soup bowl" rounds and football-shaped bread are 99 cents each, and baguettes and large semolina loaves are \$1.99. Their "small French" is big enough for four people at dinner and is 99 cents. If you want a smaller-sized roll, you can choose from olive, semolina, French, egg, ciabatta, rosemary and others for 29 cents each. Try one chewy cheese breadstick (75 cents), and you'll be coming back for more. These prices anywhere would be great, but for bread of this quality that's constantly replenished right from the ovens, it's a steal.

The shop also carries basic produce, soppressata, salami, sausage, Italian cheeses, and delicious soup by the quart (\$5.99-\$8.99). There's also homemade pesto, bruschetta, and about a dozen kinds of ravioli, including mushroom, spinach and mozzarella, broccoli rabe, grilled veggies, gluten-free cheese, pumpkin and lobster, all made in-house (\$5.99-\$12.99 for 12).

I brought home an "overstuffed" bread (\$5.95, broccoli and three cheeses, sausage and peppers, or pepperoni and cheese) that wound up being a meal. It was filled with meat and cheese, and if you ask, anyone will tell you how to heat up the breads and anything else you buy. In the middle of the shop, there are several shelves of imported pastas, oils and other Italian groceries, and it's worth the time to take a good look.

Still, we were more interested in the food we could eat while we were there, so it was on to the prepared food section. On our first visit, we let manager Joe Poli make some suggestions and set out to have a picnic in the cafe. Paper-thin eggplant cutlets (\$7.29 per pound) were excellent, as were asparagus wrapped in prosciutto (\$1.95 each), huge rice balls (\$2.75 each) and my new favorite idea: Italian egg rolls (\$2 each). Wrapped in wonton skins, they come in three flavors: sausage, broccoli rabe and Parmesan-mozzarella.

House-made mozzarella (\$6.99 per pound) is lightly salted, creamy and first-rate, as was a salad of small mozzarella balls, grape tomatoes, fresh basil and olive oil we tried on our second visit (\$6.99 per pound). Salads rotate daily, as



JERRY MCCREA/THE STAR-LEDGER

do entrees, but dishes like chicken rollatini, tortellini carbonara, stuffed rigatoni (all \$7.95 each), a large selection of paninis and a few daily sandwich and soup specials keep things interesting. Don't miss the meatballs: They're huge, delicious and cost only \$2 each.

The staff is helpful and cheery, and the motto is "never say no," so feel free to design your own picnic or just take their suggestions. You won't go wrong, especially if you mop it all up with warm bread. Anthony & Sons also caters, and the prices are reasonable.

This is an excellent example of a family running a business hands-on with pride and with common sense. Be nice, serve a good product and customers will tell others — directions included, of course. Thanks to Len, Anthony & Sons is now in my GPS.

IF YOU GO

Anthony & Sons Bakery

20 Luger Road, Denville, (973) 625-2323.

Hours: 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Mondays-Fridays; 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturdays; 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sundays

"Taste of New Jersey" appears every other week in Savor. Please send news of your favorite finds with your name and telephone numbers to Savor, "Taste of New Jersey," The Star-Ledger, 1 Star-Ledger Plaza, Newark, N.J. 07102 E-mail Brooke Tarabour at tasteofnj@starledger.com.

© 2011 NJ.com. All rights reserved.