

The grade is in the name



Tony Altomare, owner of Tony A's Pizza in Whitpain, stands behind the counter of his business last week. It is just one of four locations in the area with the other in Conshohocken, Roxborough and Spring House.

Tony A's pizzeria drawing rave reviews, awards

BY GARY PULEO
Times Herald Staff

Whitpain — Take a bite of Tony A's pizza and you can almost feel the boardwalk masses bumping into you on an overcrowded night at the shore.

Though the reach of Tony Altomare's regional chain hasn't yet extended to the well-worn slats of Wildwood, N.J., it might as well have.

With its crispy crust and just right profusion of mozzarella, the nostalgic hint of the seashore evoked by this slice of perfection comes routed by way of New York through New Jersey, on onto Pennsylvania, according to "Tony A." himself.

"A lot of boardwalk people at the Jersey shore all came from New York

with pizza that originated in Italy," Altomare said, taking a break at his artfully designed flagship Tony A's Pizza restaurant, located in Centre Square Plaza.

"I think we have phenomenal pizza — huge slices with that original flare. I make sure that quality control is there every day," said Altomare, who operates three additional stores with business partner David Smith, in Plymouth Square Shopping Center, Conshohocken; Ridge Avenue and Domino Lane, Roxborough; and Spring House Village II, Spring House.

"We take pride in our crispy crust, especially when it hits the box — all the steam that hits the pizza is taken away from the crust, he noted, "so we try to get it as crispy as we can so it doesn't turn to mush."

With all the recent contest awards and consistent raves from customers, Altomare's ego should be pretty well stroked by now.

The chain's tomato pie, with

FYI

Tony A's
1301 Skippack Pike
Whitpain
610-278-7500

its unique crust and lightly cooked tomatoes — worlds away from the conventional tomato-paste variety — reinvents the Italian specialty. When 10 companies were invited to compete at a Roxborough bake-off, Tony A's pie took top honors.

The New York pizza also holds its ground in the competitive arena, blowing away all contenders at a Chestnut Hill Great Pizza Tasting event not long ago.

Altomare's "tortellini stuffed with chicken and mushrooms" was recently voted the best pasta dish at the annual SPCA Winter Italian Food Festival for the second time.

Ironically, the popular signature dish is not of the menu.

"We do it for our catering," Altomare said. "We sell a lot of simple pasta dishes, but I find that people who go out for fancy pasta dishes usually go to a fancy Italian restaurant. I believe if you do less, you can do it better. Cheesesteaks, pizza, strombolies, hoagies, and salads — that's our focus."

Those craving an authentic South Philly hoagie should waste no time stepping up to the counter — or phoning in — and ordering the appropriately named "South Philly hoagie."

Stuffed with imported ham, sharp provolone, prosciutto and soppressata on a hearty roll from Carangi Bakery, the sandwich bears the distinct imprint of a guy who knows what he's talking about.

"If there's a better hoagie out there, I'd like to know about it," Altomare beamed.