

## DINING OUT

By Sarah Ashley Durrell

# Tripoli Bakery

## An Italian tradition of nearly 100 years opens shop in North Andover

A popular Merrimack Valley destination for more than 90 years, Tripoli Bakery now is filling appetites in North Andover with a new location featuring renowned Italian baked goodies, fresh bread and old-style pizza.

"It was a good opportunity that came up," says Matthew Zappala, a fourth-generation family member who works at Tripoli with his father, Rosario, and brother, Andrew. "It seemed like a really good location and it was something we thought we needed to do."

The bakery was originally opened in Lawrence by another family in the early 1900s. Zappala's grandfather, Angelo, and Angelo's older brother, Charlie, worked at Tripoli as kids delivering bread.

"My family was from Sicily and they lived and worked on Common Street. They were actually in the chicken business," Zappala explains. "Eventually, for reasons I'm not too sure about, my great-grandfather took over Tripoli Bakery for his kids. Angelo and Charlie's mother, Rose Zappala, became the boss and oversaw the business."

That was in the early 1900s.

Shortly after the end of World War II in the 1940s, they added their now-famous >



PHOTO BY GUY HERRICK

Working at Tripoli Bakery is a family affair. Back row, from left, Rosario Zappala, Andrew Zappala, Matthew Zappala, Leonora Zappala-Alambo and Stephen Zappala. Front row, from left, Rosina Mazzari, Saimey Maglia, Steve Zappala, Mary Gennaro and Domenic Clafalo.





## ABOUT TRIPOLI BAKERY

- ▶ **Owner:** Rosario Zappala and family.
- ▶ **Address:** New location at 542 Turnpike St., North Andover.
- ▶ **Menu:** Pizza, bread and pastries.
- ▶ **Prices:** Bread varies from 50 cents to a few dollars; pastries start around a dollar; and pizza starts at \$1.75.
- ▶ **Hours:** 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sunday through Wednesday; 8 a.m. to 1 a.m. Thursday through Saturday.
- ▶ **Contact:** 978.682.0038, [www.tripolibakery.com](http://www.tripolibakery.com).

pizza. Unique for its square shape, sweet sauce and use of provolone or American cheese, it is commonly referred to by locals as "beach pizza." Today slices start at \$1.75; a slice with extra cheese is \$2; a box of eight slices is \$24.

"The pizza started in the bakery in Lawrence," Zappala says. "It was a bakery-style pizza, so that's where the square pans came from."

After a year or so, the family opened a garage-style stand at Salisbury Beach to sell their pizza.

"During the summer it would get slow at the bakery and they had a home up at the beach, so they started a business there," Zappala explains. "The customers came up with the term 'beach pizza,' though. It's not something we've ever said or promoted."

The topping of choice today seems to be a slice of provolone. But back in the day, Tripoli only offered American cheese.

"It was popular at the time; everyone wanted a slice of American cheese," Zappala says.

The sweet sauce comes from high-quality tomatoes.

"We've stuck to the original," he says. "It's a consistent, fresh, high-quality

product and I think that shows."

By the 1990s, Tripoli added pastries to the menu. Today there are fresh-filled cannoli in choices of vanilla, chocolate or ricotta, limoncello, eclairs and more.

"I love everything, I really do," says Lucrezia Zappala-Mambro, a third-generation family member. "My favorite is probably the chocolate totes. It's a soft chocolate cookie with nuts and raisins inside, and it's dipped in chocolate fudge icing. There are also lemon totes. It's a vanilla cookie dipped in lemon icing."

She lists fig squares, cupcakes, lemon tarts and cheesecake as other favorites.

Zappala favors the cheesecake, too, as well as lobster tails — a flaky puff pastry with a whipped cream and ricotta cheese filling.

At Christmas time Tripoli offers wrapped Italian cookie trays and mini pastry planters.

"I think we've been successful, because we've been consistent," Zappala says. "We have faithful customers and throughout the years they've been really great."

Tripoli decided to open the new North Andover location due in part to the fact that a lot of their customers no longer venture into Lawrence.

"Customers have moved away," he explains. "And the bridge closing has been a big problem. It makes it harder for customers from North Andover to come to the bakery."

The new location also will serve as a late-night spot for Merrimack College students.

"That was definitely part of the opportunity," he says of the location that has been open for several months now.

"There aren't a lot of bakeries like us left," he reflects, crediting family as the driving force that keeps things going. "There are at least 35 active family members, full- and part-time, working at Tripoli. I'm fourth generation and we still have second generation working here; they're well into their 80s."

Besides the original store in Lawrence, and the beach stand that serves only pizza in Salisbury, they opened a third location in Seabrook, N.H., in 2006 before the North Andover one.

"I did a few different things career-wise before coming back to the bakery," Zappala says. "But, there's just nothing like working with your family." ■

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## CELEBRATING 80 YEARS



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