

BEHIND THE BAR



Bruno Lengyel

Tuscan With a Touch of Vermont

Mangia e Beve 9 W Main St, Wilmington • (802) 464-2539 • mangiabeve.com

When Bruno Lengyel, the owner/manager of Mangia e Beve first came to Vermont two years ago, he discovered a beauty that made it difficult for him to leave. So he didn't.

Bruno – diners, guests and friends know the affable restaurateur best by his first name – was born in Vittorio Veneto, Italy, and brought up in Hamburg, Germany. Now, Wilmington is home, and it's where he opened Mangia e Beve, a fine dining establishment in the heart of this small southern Vermont town.

"I saw a beautiful area and I stuck here," Bruno says.

Within six months, Mangia e Beve, which translates to "eat and drink," opened its doors. With an outstanding menu and unmatched service in an upscale, romantic atmosphere, it caught diners' attention immediately. Attentive servers wear shirts and ties and hustle to and from the dining room, which is lined with tables covered in white linen tablecloths.

"We are a fine dining, Tuscan-style restaurant," Bruno says from the West Main Street

destination. "We have a very nice selection of wines, nice beers and we do a couple of specialty martinis, as well."

The food, however, is what keeps guests returning over and over again – a detail that Bruno takes pride in. Pasta, meat and fish are regulars on the menu, crafted with fresh ingredients and time-tested recipes, and on Wednesdays and Thursdays he offers locals a three-course meal for \$29. The hands-on owner even shops for ingredients himself, sourcing items locally whenever possible.

"What I like best is people coming back consistently," he says. "Even if it's from far away. If they come twice a year to see us, they always come back twice a year. If they come four times a month, we'll see them every time. We build friends and families – nice relations."

The bar is stocked with an extensive list of cordials, bourbon, Scotch, grappa, tequila, cognac and port wines, while specialty coffees and desserts are on-hand to round out any

Inside, visitors will find an extensive wine list to go along with the authentic Italian fare. Bruno takes pride in the collection of more than 200 wines, something he says is "very unusual for this area." The exterior of the restaurant, on the other hand, sums up the soul of this dining destination perfectly: Tuscan with a touch of Vermont.

"We put a lot of stone in to match the Vermont area," Bruno says.

For a detailed look at the menu, visit mangiabeve.com.

What's the philosophy of your bar program?

"We always use fresh ingredients to make nice cocktails. We make sure it's a nice presentation with a full glass. We have high-top tables in the bar, and it's all the same menu – no exceptions. You can get everything in the bar that you can get in the dining room."

What cocktail is Mangia e Beve best known for?

"The Espresso Martini. We use freshly-brewed espresso, vodka and Kahlua. The difference is in the espresso. It's freshly-brewed and makes it great."

Share a behind the bar secret.

"The secret to working behind the bar successfully is to make a lot of friends and get connected. Your philosophy must be to meet people. They get to know you and then they recommend you. I like all parts of the job, but that's something I like – you meet more people behind the bar than you do behind a computer in an office, that's for sure."

What's your favorite cocktail to make?

"I like to make the Cosmopolitan because it's a great cocktail – a classic. I also like making a Manhattan, but with special cherries. We use Amarena cherries (a small, dark cherry grown in Bologna and Modena). It gives it a great flavor like when you add smokiness to a dish. It's the same thing. They're very sweet, very ripe with a big, cherry aroma. Very different from the normal Maraschino cherries." 🍷



Mangia e Beve's Espresso Martini

- 2 ounces Kahlua
- 2 ounces vodka
- 1 double shot of fresh-brewed espresso

Mix in equal parts Kahlua and vodka and add the espresso. Shake it up, pour it into a martini glass and serve.

Always drink in moderation.

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