



By Carole Gorney

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As I finished one of the best pizzas I've ever eaten at GIO Italian Grille in Macungie – Tony DiMaio explained that the patio was always intended to be an integral part of the restaurant, even to the point of using the same type of chairs inside and out. DiMaio said he and his wife Giovanna honeymooned in Naples, where they enjoyed eating outside, European – style, and they wanted to provide that experience to their customers.

There's still another reason, according to DiMaio: "Patio dining is increasing, and once one or two places have it, you want to be competitive." There are some drawbacks, though. "Patios are great when the weather is great," DiMaio observed. "Our patio attracts very loyal customers but some only come when the patio is open and the weather has to be perfect."

GIO Italian Grill has more to entice patio diners than perfect weather, however. The restaurant's progressive Italian menu focuses on fine and fresh ingredients, using authentic recipes but with a modern twist. DiMaio uses brick oven to fire roast vegetables, and he makes his own sausage from scratch. He uses local seasonal produce, but imports his flour and San Marzano tomatoes directly from Naples.

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Carole Gorney has been writing or teaching writing most of her life. A frequent contributor to Lehigh Valley Marketplace, she writes about her favorite subjects—cooking and restaurants including an article on ethnic restaurants that appeared in Marketplace in 2009.