

Hartford Courant.

THURSDAY, MAY 29, 2008

DISH

La Piastra Gourmet To Go 25 SHUNPIKE ROAD, CROMWELL 860-632-7525

This new little shop, behind a pink building housing Mortensen's Ice Cream and in the shadow of a two-story Santa statue (part of the unusual landscaping at Classic Auto Wash next door), features upscale food at some of the lowest prices we've seen in a long time.

The menu skews towards Italian and includes a range of Southern Italian favorites as well as more innovative options and a few Asian and Indian choices.

Salads include a spinach and Gorgonzola toss with strawberries or oranges, candied walnuts and a house-made citrus dressing. Asian cabbage salad features almonds, sesame seeds, crunchy noodles and scallions with a rice wine vinaigrette. Curried chicken salad with currants, celery, scallions and curry mayo is our house's new lunch favorite.

Generously sized, ready-to-heat dinners are advertised as "feeding two." (Unless one of those eating is a lumberjack, expect leftovers.) Penne a la Vodka features a creamy tomato sauce; veggie lasagna is layered with roasted vegetables, ricotta and mozzarella; salmon over orzo includes roasted onions and tomatoes.

A package of two large marinated-and-grilled chicken breasts is \$4.95. Side dishes, such as sautéed broccoli rabe with chunks of garlic and chilled green beans with toasted almonds and aioli, are great go-alongs. La Piastra stocks pasta sauces, fresh pastas, fresh bread and desserts.

The shop, which also offers catering services, is open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Information: 860-632-7528 or www.lapiastra.com

— KORKY VANN