

# FLAVOR

## PORT CITY



PHOTO/VISIT ALEXANDRIA

Ada's on the River features both indoor and outdoor dining.

## Alexandria's pandemic-era food culture

**Over the past year, COVID-19 has impacted restaurant owners and diners in unexpected ways**

BY WILL SCHICK

COVID-19 has changed just about everything, including Alexandria food culture. In just under a year, it has transformed the way the city thinks about restaurant dining, changing not only the ways locals dine at restaurants but also how their restaurants serve them food.

According to the city's revenue division, 17 out of 422 local restaurants, about 4%, have closed during the pandemic. When compared to the national average, this figure appears low. According to the National Restaurant Association, one in six restaurants have closed nationwide because of COVID-19.

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**Pizza  
party**

PHOTO/OLIVIA ANDERSON

The Diavola pizza at Lena's Wood-Fired Pizza & Tap features fried kale and calabrese hot honey drizzled on top.

**Pizza joints thrived during COVID-19, even when other businesses didn't**

BY OLIVIA ANDERSON

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many Alexandria restaurants to either close their doors entirely or shift gears and adapt to an ever-changing food landscape. But pizza restaurants are a different story.

No stranger to the to-go box, the quick and transportable nature of pizza has helped these businesses survive in a time when so many are struggling to stay afloat, and in certain cases it's actually helped them thrive.

Some local pizza joints are longtime neighborhood fixtures and others opened for the first time during the global pandemic, but they all show no sign of slowing down anytime soon.

SEE PIZZA

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PHOTO/OLIVIA ANDERSON

The drinks at Dolci & Gelati are made with an Italian Espresso from Greenberry's Coffee Roasters in Charlottesville, Virginia.



PHOTO/OLIVIA ANDERSON

For Five Coffee Roasters' espresso features a unique blend of Ethiopian Gera, Sumatra and Colombia Nariño coffee.



PHOTO/OLIVIA ANDERSON

The coffee at Fontaine Caffe & Creperie comes from Roastee Toastee Coffee, whose owner Joe Moriarity takes pride in his fresh, single-origin beans.

# Stop and smell the coffee

## Join the Times' quest to find the best cappuccino

BY OLIVIA ANDERSON

Everyone loves coffee. Well, most people love coffee, but we'll forgive the tea totalers.

That's why, for this edition of the Alexandria Times' Port City Flavor section, I thought I would embark on a caffeine-infused adventure to compare cappuccinos at three of Alexandria's most beloved coffee shops. I chose to stick to cappuccinos because I have a soft spot for them and honestly, who doesn't enjoy a good cappuccino?

Some have a flair for presentation and others concentrate more on the bean itself, but each one serves up its own delicious version of the drink we all love so much.

### Dolci & Gelati

*What's the verdict?* Dolci & Gelati, located across from Market Square in Old Town, deeply understands that cappuccinos should be foamy and frothy. In certain cases, this is something that all too often gets lost during preparation and as a result ends up with the drink more closely resembling a latte. Fortunately, I received my cappuccino in a ceramic blue mug filled to the brim with burbling steamed milk foam, which was as pleasing for the eyes as it was for the taste buds. Plus, the espresso itself was piping hot and the ideal complement to a cozy fall afternoon in an allegedly haunted building – but that's a story for another time.

*What's the coffee?* According to owner Eric Roper, the coffee comes

from Greenberry's Coffee Roasters in Charlottesville, Virginia. Roper, who graduated from the University of Virginia, also located in Charlottesville, learned of the roastery while in school and was immediately hooked. The espresso drinks are made with an Italian Espresso blend, and the drip coffee is made daily with a rotating selection of beans.

*What else is there?* Because Dolci & Gelati also specializes in gelato, Roper said most of the unique menu items revolve around gelato-coffee combinations. One popular selection among patrons is the affogato, an Italian-based dessert that features a scoop of gelato "drowned" in a shot of espresso. The shop also offers a Nitro Cold Brew that can be poured over any flavor of gelato. Finally, Roper said the house specialty

is the Salty Dirty Chai, which mixes the sweetness of salted caramel gelato with the bitterness of coffee and chai.

"We're big into the combinations of gelato and coffee. We do have our pump sweeteners, but we like to use gelato to sweeten the coffee as well," Roper said.

### For Five Coffee Roasters

*What's the verdict?* If there was an award for best latte art, it would go to the colossal cappuccino I ordered at For Five Coffee Roasters next to the King Street Metro station. Not only could I tell that the barista had fun personalizing my drink with three rows of autumnal microfoam leaves, I also had my