



Rigatoni Bolognese with beef, pork and veal meat, light tomato fresh basil sauce and ricotta cheese.

# *a taste of* TUSCANY

By Christina Vercelletto  
Photos by John Vercelletto

**RISTORANTE GEMELLI**, a longtime favorite in Babylon, has managed to stay fresh and inviting in a village where eateries cycle in and out almost continuously. Diners feel as if they are tucked away at an Italian villa when they enter this family-run, upscale establishment. Exposed brick walls, a working fireplace in the main room and an airy atrium lend charm upon entry. The

coatroom is well heated, so during those cooler months, your jacket is warm when you retrieve it. A covered lounge area on the patio is an ideal spot to grab cocktails and comfortable seating and elegant space heaters make the area usable into the fall.

The service is the star here as much as the authentic Italian cuisine. On a recent Sunday visit, the servers seemed quite

busy, but remained professional and friendly. And as anyone will tell you, Sunday dinners in a bustling Italian household always promise a rewarding meal from start to finish. This isn't the place to go for a fast bite, though. Much as one would never rush away from the table at their Italian Nonna's home, Gemelli's is a dining experience that is best enjoyed at a relaxed pace.

Our selections from the bar were a salted caramel martini, rich and bracing, and a cucumber mojito. The latter boasted tiny, crisp cubes of cuke, and was garnished with a sprig of mint that the bartender picked from a potted plant on the patio. It doesn't get fresher than that.

Embarking on our taste of Tuscany, we sampled the Polpo Marinate, marinated, grilled octopus with Cerignola green olives, parsley, garlic and extra virgin olive oil, which was lemony and bright. The octopus had the just the right amount of char and was fork tender and the portion was large enough to be a small meal in itself. The Cavolo Salad was crisp and fresh, featuring a bed of baby kale that cradled a mixture of avocado, apples, golden raisins and toasted pumpkin seeds, all lovingly coated in a pomegranate dressing.

It's safe to say the wide selection of pastas rules the entrée section of the dinner menu, as one might expect at any Italian restaurant. Most diners seem to come here for the homemade pastas and sauces, crafted in the old world style, like the Rigatoni Bolognese that is laced with beef, pork and veal, and topped with a dollop of rich, fresh basil ricotta cheese.

Some of the more popular non-pasta mains include the massive veal chop and the Cernia, pan-seared grouper stuffed with lobster

meat, shrimp, caramelized onions and spinach, drizzled with a Pinot Grigio sauce. Moist Spanish yellow rice with corn and peas folded in accompanies the tender fish.

If you still have room for dolce, Torta Caprese, a warm flourless chocolate cake topped with chopped almonds and a touch of rum, is a sure bet, especially alongside a frothy cappuccino.

You'll leave Ristorante Gemelli feeling heartily satisfied, reflecting on a delicious, home-cooked meal that leaves you pondering what you will order on your next trip back. Buon appetito! *LIL*

*Christina Vercelletto is a lifestyle writer in Babylon. Her work has appeared in scores of national and New York metro-area publications and websites, including Newsday, Travel + Leisure, Family Circle and Thrillist.com.*



The patio at Ristorante Gemelli

Grilled marinated octopus with Cerignola green olives, parsley, garlic, lemon and extra virgin olive oil.

