

Who's Louie Bossi?



By [John Tanasychuk](#)
contact the reporter

★★★★½

Let me count the ways that Louie Bossi's, the 8-week old Italian restaurant on Las Olas Boulevard, is breaking all the rules of restauranteering.

We all know restaurants where the linguine or the spaghetti is made in-house. But at Louie Bossi's, they're making 14 different shapes of pasta. They're making their own bread and pizza dough. They're making the spicy giardiniera and rosemary potato chips that accompany sandwiches at lunch. They're making gelato and cannoli shells. They're even making the little sugar cookies that sit on the edge of your coffee saucer after dinner.

Perhaps most impressive is that chef Louie Bossi, a partner in this namesake restaurant with Big Time Restaurant Group, is making his own charcuterie. You can see the soppressata and coppa hanging in temperature-controlled coolers.

I am in awe of Louie Bossi, both the chef and the restaurant. Most restaurants operate on the mandate of economies of scale. Why make bread? Why cure pancetta? Bossi, on the other hand, embraces Old World tradition in a new-fangled restaurant setting.

I knew something was up at lunch when I ordered a sandwich called the Boss (\$15). It may be one of the best sandwiches I've ever eaten. Piled onto a house-made roll was tender, thinly sliced roast pork called porchetta and a slice of provolone. It got a spread of pesto, a handful of arugula and a sprinkle of cherry peppers. It was brilliantly balanced, especially when paired with a Brooklyn Caesar (\$13), kale with crispy pancetta and a poached egg. Add beef (\$9) to the salad, and you'll get a chopped steak patty. This is what happens when a chef with Bossi's gifts isn't afraid to dip into the restaurant canon and offer a delightfully retro cut.

Make room for charcuterie and cheese, even if these aren't a regular part of your diet. Fennel-seasoned finocchiona and dry salami known as soppressata don't get any better than here. A selection of three costs \$15. A 1.5-ounce serving of cheese costs \$5. We had creamy robiola, mild Gorgonzola and delicious aged Parmigiano-Reggiano. Cheese and meat are served on oversize wooden boards with olives and thin, crispy breadsticks.

Pizza is still another specialty here. We ordered a simple white pizza (\$19) with cherry tomatoes, mozzarella di bufala, sea salt and basil. The crust was a bit too chewy, but I believe that's a personal preference.

Pasta was superb, from a simple radiatori (\$19) with eggplant, San Marzanotomato sauce and ricotta to paccheri (\$25) with mushrooms and mascarpone. This is how pasta was meant to be made.

At dinner, I couldn't resist more of the porchetta (\$24) from the sandwich. It was just as tender as that lunchtime treat, but I was expecting a few crunchy pieces in the huge pile of pork. Side dishes include rapini (\$6) with garlic, lemon and chili; and fingerling potatoes (\$6) with Parm-Reg, rosemary, garlic and olive oil. I ordered market vegetables (\$5), which were so good I'd put them on the regular menu: roasted cauliflower, zucchini and yellow squash.

Have I mentioned that Louie Bossi's also dry-ages its own beef? There's a New York strip (\$29 for the 14-ounce/\$40 for the 20-ounce) and a very good rib-eye (\$29 for the 16-ounce/\$42 for the 24-ounce), all served with roasted garlic and rosemary. While the bone-in rib-eye was thinner than I expected, it still managed to be cooked perfectly medium rare. It had lovely flavor, but a little too much fat.

Along with a good-size menu, there are specials. It was whole snapper (\$28) the night we dined, and every bite was as moist as the last. It was expertly filleted in the kitchen.

Desserts are just as thoughtful as the savory side of the menu, including cannoli (\$6) filled with sweet ricotta and a marvel called Louie's Nana's cheesecake (\$8). It is big enough for four people to share and has elements of American (graham-cracker crust) and Italian (ricotta-based?) cheesecakes.

I can't imagine anyone not loving the restaurant's multimillion-dollar design, from Karen Hanlon Design in Hollywood and Big Time principal Todd Herbst. Hanlon's firm also did Big Time's Big City Tavern, just down the street. Big Time gets that we want our restaurants to entertain us visually. Have a look at any of their Rocco's Tacos locations.

RCC Associates of Deerfield Beach rebuilt the 10,000-square-foot restaurant top to bottom. It's huge, with seating for 300 people inside and outside. The piazza, as they call it, has a fire pit and bocce ball court. It also has a translucent roof that makes rain a nonissue. With framed mirrors on the walls and a wrought-iron gazebo, it puts me in mind of the Italian neighborhood of my childhood, which was full of curlicue wrought-iron fences, railings and decorative grilles.

Inside, the bar area has a rough-hewn ceiling and brilliant, bordello-red upholstery. In the main dining room, there's a wide marble bar with 10 stools that provides a bird's-eye view of the massive kitchen.

Louie Bossi's is often bustling. And on a night when the place is full, it can be hard to hard to hear, let alone move. What you will hear, however, is the hospitality of the staff. Doors are opened. Goodbyes are offered. Thank-yous are a constant. Glitches are few.

Anyone who's ever worked in the service industry knows it's much easier to be hospitable when the restaurant where you're working is at the top of its game. That would be Louie Bossi's.

jtanasychuk@SouthFlorida.com or 954-356-4632. Read his blog at [SouthFlorida.com/Sup](#) and follow him at [Twitter.com/FloridaEats](#).

Louie Bossi's

1032 E. Las Olas Blvd., Fort Lauderdale

954-356-6699, [LouieBossi.com](#)

Cuisine: Italian

Cost: Moderate-expensive

Hours: Lunch and dinner daily, brunch Saturday-Sunday

Reservations: Suggested

Credit cards: All major

Bar: Full service

Sound level: Very noisy when full

Outside smoking: Yes

For kids: Highchairs, boosters, menu

Wheelchair accessible: Yes

Parking: \$7 valet or nearby meters