

Take this food home, you'll come back



if you go

Zuzanna's Gourmet
Where: 1152 Route 10 West, Suite 4, Townline Plaza, Randolph
Phone: (973) 584-5858; fax: (973) 584-5088
Hours: Monday-Wednesday, 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Thursday and Friday, 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Closed Sundays.
Cuisine: European international, delicatessen and catering. Full service gourmet market, cooked take-out, desserts.
Specials: Home-cooked from scratch; specials vary daily.
Price range: Sandwiches/wraps, \$6.49-\$7.49; soups, \$3-\$4; paninis, \$6.99 (made on ciabatta roll); take-out and salads, \$6-\$10 (sold by the pound); hot and cold entrees, \$6-\$10 (average).
Catering: Full service, all occasions, home-cooked to order from scratch.
Atmosphere: take-out, welcoming, informal, spotless, delightful people. takeout: full menu, generous portions, scrumptious home-made food.
Gift certificates: Available for every occasion.
Payment: All major cards.
Parking: Ample lot at Townline Plaza.
Proprietor: Zuzanna Baranski.

ELIJAH MENDEZ / RANDOLPHROXBURY THIS WEEK

Customers pay for their orders at Zuzanna's Gourmet in Randolph. This little gem opened only weeks ago, and the word is getting around.

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BY TRICIA VANDERHOOF
 RANDOLPHROXBURY THIS WEEK

RANDOLPH — It might be easy to zip past this little gem as you drive Route 10, but you won't do it twice. Zuzanna's is part of Townline Plaza on the westbound lane, past County College of Morris, just before the Route 10/Sussex Turnpike merge at the bottom of the hill.

Zuzanna Baranski and husband Andrzej opened Zuzanna's Gourmet only weeks ago, and the word is getting around. CCM students tell each other, "The food's really good at that new place across the highway." Zuzanna also runs a very successful catering business, and long-established customers stop by, too.

"Here, we feature home-made food, from scratch. People know," she said.

"In my catering business, I had a long-time customer who was skeptical when I suggested he try the Turkey Meatballs. I said, 'I promise that mine are so much better, you will prefer them (to traditional meatballs).' Now he's a believer. I have to call every time I make them."

"People tell each other when food is especially good, and they will come to trust your judgment. I catered an affair for our (Townline) landlord's group. When I asked what dishes he wanted, he gave me carte blanche to choose the menu. There were unanimous raves."

Marty Epstein, who owns Marty's Reliable Cycle, stopped by to rave about Zuzanna's cooking.

"All the guys (on the strip) eat here, and we can't wait for her daily specials," Epstein said. "Her food is the best; nothing like it! Zuzanna doesn't know it yet, but we're organizing a bike ride and



Zuzanna Baranski is the owner and chef of Zuzanna's Gourmet, in Townline Plaza on Route 10 West in Randolph.

she's catering." Food here is a creation, with prep for some next-day specials beginning the night before. Wednesday's was luscious, moist brisket with mushrooms and caramelized onions. On another day it will be succulent pierogies, the Polish version of filled dumplings. These can be fried, served with butter, at times served with finely chopped fried onions. Every family has its own recipe and preference.

Sometimes the special features stuffed cabbage, also known as cabbage rolls and in Polish called "Glumpkies," filled with rice and beef.

Zuzanna and Andrzej reid the space themselves. A new tile floor is scrubbed clean; display cases sparkle; a full-sized bistro chef statue holds aloft a menu board that says, "Welcome!" Zuzanna greets you with a smile from behind the counter,

in New York City. "At ICE, I was torn between a degree in culinary arts or pastry and baking arts. I love both. When I came to this country, I watched the Food Channel and read books. I would make lists and take them to the supermarket and ask, 'What is this?' That's how I learned English. Until I went to the Institute I was self-taught, but I was always a good cook and very good at baking. I even melted chocolate with a blow-dryer in my apartment so that it would be smooth and fold properly."

Zuzanna learned to cook growing up in a small town in southwest Poland.

"My grandmother and mother and father were all excellent cooks. I have always been cooking," she said.

"Every weekend one of us took turns in the kitchen. When it was our turn, we had to prepare the entire meal. It was (my older sister) Ewa, then me, then mom, then dad.

"My grandparents had a farm, and I spent a lot of time with them. We grew vegetables, picked fruit, did everything. I had the happiest, the best childhood. And I always loved to cook."

"Food was always my passion. When I came to the U.S., I entertained a lot, every week."

Zuzanna kept track of her menus to be sure she didn't repeat the same dishes for her guests.

"I used to tell people, 'Don't eat before you come.' But they learned."

Her new menu lists a variety of sandwiches, wraps, and paninis for \$6.49 to \$7.49. Other dishes are sold by the pound. You can select penne with pesto, roasted peppers and fresh home-made mozzarella. There are ziti; chicken/meat

lasagna; tortellini salad.

Zuzanna's House Chicken Salad is exceptional. It's both spicy and sweet, prepared with red peppers and celery, with honey-mustard vinaigrette.

"It's European cooking, a balance of sour and sweet; I use balsamic vinegar."

But the specialty of the house is panko-crusted chicken breast.

Originally from Japan, panko breadcrumbs — often referred to as Japanese-style breadcrumbs — are made from specially baked wheat bread that's been crumbled into big flakes and then toasted. They have a lighter texture than conventional breadcrumbs. When used in fried or baked goods, they are crisp, flaky, light. They brown better, do not get soggy on the inside, stay crunchier on the outside.

Word-of-mouth is vital to any business, and fellow mail-mates aren't the only ones generating buzz.

"We get a lot of students from CCM, and they come back with their friends. We're very popular with the students, especially for paninis and sandwiches."

Paninis are made on a ciabatta roll, an Italian white yeast-bread made with wheat flour.

Students stop in before or between classes for caramelized biscotti, for a hot or cold wrap or sandwich, or to pick up dinner or soup to take home.

Expect generous portions. "If you eat only half of my 8-inch sub — closer actually to 10 inches — you won't need to eat again for at least half a day."

From Zuzanna's menu, choose favorites like Prosciutto, Sopressata (a traditional Italian sausage) and Provolone; Roast Beef and

Turkey with Roasted Peppers; Grilled Zucchini and Roasted Peppers with Fresh Mozzarella; or create your own sandwich from anything else on offer.

"I use only Boar's Head cold cuts, get all my breads only from Calandra's. Before we opened, I sampled breads from many suppliers, but there was no comparison. It costs somewhat more, but it is the best. And my customers taste the difference. They come back again and again."

There are irresistible home-made desserts: cappuccino brownies, bread pudding, caramelized biscotti and tiramisu, made with Kahlua, a sweet coffee liqueur imported from Mexico. Enjoy her scrumptious salads and soups, great regular or decaf coffee, tea — including green tea. And don't forget to pick out one of the yummy foil-wrapped Polish chocolates at the register.

Zuzanna's kitchen stocks Callebaut chocolate from Belgium. Although not well-known to the public over here, Zuzanna said Callebaut had a booth at the recent National Candy Gift and Gourmet Show in Atlantic City — America's largest show dedicated to the retail confectioner, sponsored by the Retail Confectioners Association of Philadelphia. Callebaut, the world's leading manufacturer of high quality cocoa and chocolate products, is used by some of the finest pastry chefs in the world.

So slow down as you come down that hill on Route 10 West. Pick up something delectable to take home. Serve it to friends and family. Guaranteed, you'll be back because, as Zuzanna will tell you, "This is real food."

Got a restaurant you'd like to read about? Tell us at contact@randolphroxburythisweek.com.