

WELCOMING PRINCETON

Recognizing the contributions made by newcomers and immigrants

NINO'S PIZZA STAR



We were born in Princeton and have been eating Mr. Spera's Italian food and pizza at "Nino's Pizza Star" in the Princeton Shopping Center since we were little kids. What Princeton area child has not? It was a treat to sit down with none other than Mr. Nino Spera himself. Mr. Spera hails from Villalba, Sicily in the Province of Caltanissetta, Italy. Mr. Spera was ten years old when he came to the US with his family. He attended St. James School in North Trenton. He started working in the restaurant business with his uncle in Wildwood, NJ. He became the owner of Pizza Star in 1977, changing the name to Nino's Pizza Star. Mr. Spera

had other family members in the restaurant business and thus lots of experience from a young age. When asked about the biggest help when starting his business, Mr. Spera said his father would come every morning and help out so that Mr. Spera could sleep in after twelve hour days, seven days a week. Mr. Spera commented on the long hours dedicated to growing his business. He luckily had family and friends in the beginning who helped. His challenges were paying bills and paying off the business. He thinks the Princeton community is very friendly and highly recommends our town to immigrants. Mr. Spera has supported youth sports teams over the years and he loves knowing and feeding so many kids and area families through the years. Our favorite Pizza Star dish is Rigatoni Vodka, and of course, the pizza. We got to see Mr. Spera spin a pie which was a thrill! Mr. Spera's favorite dish is Pasta Bolognese. We are pretty sure you can't go wrong with anything on the menu! On offering advice to other immigrants trying to find the path to their American dream, Mr. Spera said "Work hard and you'll make it. Everybody counts". This philosophy is clearly evident in the staff working alongside Mr. Spera. He has many Guatemalan employees. He joked that they can understand each other perfectly well with a blend of Italian Spanglish. We think Nino's Pizza Star is a terrific blend of immigrants from different generations and locations finding their way together in the Princeton community!

Interview by Avelyn and Emerlee Simons

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