

## Pie in the Sky

Pizzeria Cerino serves up pizza fit for the gods

by [Douglas Trattner](#)



Eddie's Pizzeria Cerino  
7305 Broadview Rd.,  
Seven Hills 216-236-6007  
[pizzeriacerino.com](http://pizzeriacerino.com)  
Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.  
Monday through Thursday;  
till 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Ask a restaurant critic about the bane of his existence and more likely than not it will be Italian restaurants. Like corner pubs and Chinese take-outs, every neighborhood's got one and few truly rise above the fray. Driving clear across town to eat at yet another mom-and-pop meatball shop — well, that's just crazy.

That's why it has taken me nearly two years to drag my hired tongue out to Eddie's Pizzeria Cerino, a Seven Hills pasta palace that kept getting pushed to the bottom of the list. But what's that saying about assumptions? Over the course of just two visits, this cheerful Italian eatery managed to mend my perennially pessimistic stance toward the entire genre. And for that, I'm grateful.

If the Cerino name sounds familiar, that's because it is. Carrie Cerino's in North Royalton has been sating Cleveland diners for generations, while over in Brecksville, another Cerino was doing the same at a popular place called Eddie's Creekside. After nearly 20 years there, Eddie Cerino took his talents to Seven Hills, where in early 2009 he opened a place of his own.

Eddie's Pizzeria is proof that if you do everything right, people will respond favorably. On any given night, couples and families queue up for a seat in the

bright, bustling, and attractive dining room. Given that the place doesn't take reservations for small parties, weekend waits are common. A next-door bar-and-lounge expansion has helped, but it didn't prevent a 30-minute wait on a recent Friday night.

What's Eddie Cerino doing that his colleagues are not? For starters, this Culinary Institute of America grad approaches traditional Italian food less like a grandmother and more like a chef. The result is food that looks familiar and comforting but tastes fresh and modern. Cerino also gives his guests control over portion sizes, a concept that simultaneously ups value while lowering prices. Almost every salad, starter, and pasta on the menu can be ordered in half or full sizes. Pizzas come in three sizes and two different crusts.

We could have stopped eating after the bread course and left happy. Cerino's airy, house-baked focaccia, presented with pepper-dusted olive oil, rivals that of a fine Italian bakeshop. Though wonderful on its own, the bread really comes in handy alongside the mussels (\$8.95), served in a deep bowl of buttery broth. Calamari fans can choose between three different preparations (\$10.95). We settled on a spicy version with crisply fried onions and banana peppers. Next time, we'll ask for a side of marinara instead of the accompanying sour-cream-based dip.

The house wedding soup (\$2.95) features a rich broth, loads of zesty little meatballs, and plenty of wilted spinach. Salads are big and fresh, and while we prefer our Caesar (\$4.50) dressing to pack more punch, that didn't prevent us from destroying it. Pizzas are delivered to the table on an elevated stand, preserving valuable table real estate for other delicious items (like Great Lakes Christmas Ale on tap). We bypassed the build-your-own process in favor of the classic Margarita (\$10.95/9-inch). The pies feature a sturdy, flavorful crust, available in thin or not-so-thin varieties.

Pair a small pizza and two half-orders of pasta for a perfectly proportioned and priced meal. The thick, meaty sauce on the rigatoni Bolognese (\$6.95/half) hits all the right notes, while the baked ravioli (\$7.95/half) is a less satisfying one-dimensional cheese-and-cream fest. Cerino's chicken Parm (\$10.95) manages to revive a long-dormant fondness for this hearty dish thanks to its combination of crisp-coated chicken, melted cheese, al dente spaghetti, and vivid marinara. Vegetarians can enjoy a meatless version made with eggplant (\$10.95). At lunchtime, focaccia sandwiches are stuffed with the same quality ingredients, including sausage and peppers (\$8.50), meatballs (\$8.50), and chicken Parm (\$8.95). All come with soup and fries.

Thoughtful service extends even to take-out orders, which are carefully prepared, packed, and presented for payment at a small counter in front of the open kitchen. That's one way to enjoy Cerino's mood-boosting comfort food while sidestepping those pesky waits.