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Mambo Italiano

227 Sandy Springs Place, Sandy Springs, 404-255-4444

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 For the Journal-Constitution

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Anyone who's visited the Forum in Norcross has been enticed by the aromas emanating from the Italian eatery Mambo Italiano. Now diners in Sandy Springs have their own scent to follow, the doors of the second Mambo that recently opened in the City Walk complex.

Owners Angelo and Nicole Laios took over a former Doc Chey's space for their latest venture. The project required extensive renovations to the dining room for 100 and a patio for 80. They also added a bar that seats 20. But when it came to the menu, they left their successful formula in place.

"We are really known for our wood-fired pizzas," said Nicole Laios. "We brought in an oven from Tuscany to make them."

Classic Italian

There are 16 pizza varieties to pick from and each comes with an appealing array of toppings. Go Hawaiian with pineapple or Neapolitan with anchovies. Seafood, ham, spicy Italian sausage, artichokes, diced chicken and pesto sauce are just a few of the layers you can pile on. The most asked for is a four-cheese, with buffalo mozzarella, provolone, goat cheese and pecorino. There's also a selection of calzones and stromboli.

Beyond pies, diners may start off with fried calamari or shrimp, bruschetta, mussels, fried ravioli or the soup du jour. Pasta dishes pair linguine, fettuccine, penne, capellini, gnocchi, ravioli or spaghetti with meatballs, mussels, shrimp, chicken, pancetta, anchovies and vegetables.

Main dishes include filet mignon in a pepper cognac sauce; flounder and chicken francaise; eggplant Parmesan; and chicken or veal in the style of picatta, Parm or Marsala.

Most of the dinner menu is available during the lunch hours, with the addition of paninis and hoagies, served with small salads.

Save room for Mambo's desserts, particularly the "crazy cake" — great for people who can't decide. It's a six-layer mountain of various cakes — red velvet, chocolate, tiramisu, chocolate mousse, carrot and strawberry shortcake. There's also a cannoli cake and 15 flavors of gelatos imported from Italy, all available to take home for later enjoyment.

From the bar

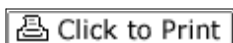
The specialty martini list has plenty of suggestions, but if you don't see what you like, make up your own from the bar's selection of vodkas and ingredients. There are eight beers on tap and another dozen in bottles. More than 50 wines are available by the bottle or glass, including a good representation from Italy, South Africa and California. Grappa is also available.

Coming up

A third Mambo is under construction in downtown Woodstock. That location should be open early next year.

- **Where:** 227 Sandy Springs Place, Sandy Springs, 404-255-4444
- **Signature dish:** Four-cheese pizza, with mozzarella, pecorino, goat cheese and provolone
- **Entree prices:** \$10-\$16; pizzas, \$10-\$13
- **Hours:** 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Sundays-Thursdays; 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Fridays-Saturday
- **Reservations:** yes
- **Credit cards:** yes
- **Web site:** www.mamboitaliano.net

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