BUSINESS PROFILE

Local restaurateur back in the business

But Sal Basile's still doing real estate deals

BY EVAN WILLIAMS
ewilliams@florida-weekly.com

Opening a restaurant is an enormous undertaking – just ask anyone who's tried it – and developing real-estate on top of that would be a multi-tasking imbroglio. But that's just what Sal Basile, 45, is now taking on.

Fortunately, he has the experience on both ends. Basile already helped bring Fort Myers over 30 years of well-known Italian fare. But he traded the hospitality industry for real-estate opportunity six years ago and became landlord of the Bella Villa shops on Daniels Parkway, even though he considers himself a restaurateur to the core.

Now, within Bella Villa, he's opening a new eatery called "Two Meatballs in the Kitchen."

"It'll be the first of this concept that's out in this area," he said.

The hustling, bustling Brooklyn native and his family created the original Nino's on US 41 before they all decided to move back to New York. Basile, who had just met his wife, Rose, decided to stay in Fort Myers, start a family of his own, and open Taste of New York on Winkler Avenue near the Edison Mall when he was 23 years old.

A few years later he opened another Taste in the Bell Tower Shops.

"The movie theatre was really booming," Basile said.

But he had ambitions in real estate, and when the market was booming in Fort Myers six years ago he sold Taste of New York to operate the Bella Villa shops. He opened another restaurant there named for his wife, Bella Rosa.

Three years ago, he sold that fine dining operation, and bought 10 more acres West of Bella Villa, where he plans to develop more shops. The restaurant Java Moon was the first place to open on it. Next door to Java Moon, a 20,000-square-foot office building is going up. Currently, he's looking for a bank that would want to move in on the property.

Even though Two Meatballs hasn't opened yet, he wants to open another one. "I'm doing one at a time because of the economy the way it is."

Two Meatballs will be a casual, family-style affair, he said. The kitchen will be run by his son-in-law Paul Torocco, who just got back from two military tours of duty in Iraq.

"He said, 'What am I gonna do when I get out,'" Basile said. "I said, 'I've got something for you.'"

His daughter Gina will operate the front of the house.

"I'm going back old-school," Basile said.

By that he means the recipes will be traditional and made with as many fresh, organic ingredients and herbs as possible. The bar will pour beer and wine only for the 72-seat dining room, where patrons may enjoy pizza, stromboli and other Basile family classics. His favorite dish is one with "all different kinds of seafood in a light tomato sauce."

FLORIDA WEEKLY PHOTO

Sal Basile

His wife Rose and daughter Alaina will also play various roles at the restaurant (Basile has five children altogether.) And of course he'll be there, too, when he's not working on the real-estate side.

"I'll be like the Godfather," he said, smiling at the thought of his reign over the place. "Overseeing everything."

The two Meatballs in the name stand for his son and son-in-law who he remembers goofing off in the kitchen. Basile has fond memories of his own childhood kitchen in Brooklyn, growing up in a big Italian family. He remembers the great cooking, of course, and also the stick ball games. Kids bounded off the stoops and into the streets and neighborhoods for daily games that went on until dusk all summer long.

"What you remember is that it was never boring," he said.

Although it was a great place to be at the time, Basile said he's here to stay in the town where he created his own roots.

"Florida's home," he said. "This is where my family is." ■

KRAFT CONSTRUCTION • FGCU STUDENT HOUSING • J. MCGARVEY CONSTRUCTION • RED SOX STADIUM • GATEWAY CHARTER SCHOOL • WCI • AMERICAN AIRLINES ARENA • BILTMORE CONSTRUCTION • J. L. WALLACE, INC. • GERMAIN ARENA • SURETY CONSTRUCTION • FPL TURKEY POINT OFFICES • OWEN-AMES-KIMBALL • HENNING CONSTRUCTION • SPRINGHILL SUITES • HERITAGE PALMS • FOWLER CONSTRUCTION • USF HOUSING • BANCATLANTIC ARENA • BUNDSCHU KRAFT • PINKERTON & LAWS • LEXINGTON MIDDLE SCHOOL • POWELL CONSTRUCTION • MARQUESA ROYALE • NORDSTROM'S • BROOKS & FREUND • KRAFT CONSTRUCTION • FGCU STUDENT HOUSING • J. MCGARVEY CONSTRUCTION • RED SOX STADIUM • GATEWAY CHARTER SCHOOL • WCI • AMERICAN AIRLINES ARENA • BILTMORE CONSTRUCTION • J. L. WALLACE, INC. • GERMAIN ARENA • SURETY CONSTRUCTION • FPL TURKEY POINT OFFICES • OWEN-AMES-KIMBALL • HENNING CONSTRUCTION • SPRINGHILL SUITES • HERITAGE PALMS • FOWLER CONSTRUCTION • USF HOUSING • BANCATLANTIC ARENA • BUNDSCHU KRAFT • PINKERTON & LAWS • LEXINGTON MIDDLE SCHOOL • POWELL CONSTRUCTION • MARQUESA ROYALE • NORDSTROM'S • BROOKS & FREUND KRAFT CONSTRUCTION • FGCU STUDENT HOUSING • J. MCGARVEY CONSTRUCTION • RED SOX STADIUM • GATEWAY CHARTER SCHOOL • WCI • AMERICAN AIRLINES ARENA • BILTMORE CONSTRUCTION • J. L. WALLACE, INC. • GERMAIN ARENA • SURETY CONSTRUCTION • FPL TURKEY POINT OFFICES • OWEN-AMES-KIMBALL • HENNING CONSTRUCTION • SPRINGHILL SUITES • HERITAGE PALMS • FOWLER CONSTRUCTION • USF HOUSING • BANCATLANTIC ARENA • BUNDSCHU KRAFT • PINKERTON & LAWS • LEXINGTON MIDDLE SCHOOL • POWELL CONSTRUCTION • MARQUESA ROYALE • NORDSTROM'S • BROOKS & FREUND KRAFT CONSTRUCTION • FGCU STUDENT HOUSING • J. MCGARVEY CONSTRUCTION • RED SOX STADIUM • GATEWAY CHARTER SCHOOL • WCI • AMERICAN AIRLINES ARENA • BILTMORE CONSTRUCTION • J. L. WALLACE, INC. • GERMAIN ARENA • SURETY CONSTRUCTION • FPL TURKEY POINT OFFICES • OWEN-AMES-KIMBALL • HENNING CONSTRUCTION • SPRINGHILL SUITES • HERITAGE PALMS • FOWLER CONSTRUCTION • USF HOUSING • BANCATLANTIC ARENA •

On our 55th anniversary, we'd like to congratulate Florida Weekly on their 1st!

55th Anniversary

Cement Industries, Inc.
Prestressed concrete products
2709 Jeffcott Street • Fort Myers, FL 33901
www.cementindustries.com • info@cementindustries.com

COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS • MULTI-FAMILY • OFFICES • PARKING GARAGES • RESIDENTIAL • SCHOOLS • SOUND WALLS • STADIUMS/ARENAS