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We understood that chef Wade Moises knew a thing or two about pasta thanks to his stint at Sassi. However, it was only recently that we realized just how passionate he was about the Italian essential: When he opened [PastaBar](#), a restaurant devoted solely to everyone's favorite carb-filled craving.



Everyone loves pasta. Homemade lasagna, cheese-filled raviolis and spaghetti and meatballs evoke thoughts of gourmet glee in all of us. But chef Wade Moises, formerly of North Scottsdale's Sassi and two of Mario Batali's restaurants, loves pasta. In fact, earlier this year, he opened a Downtown Phoenix restaurant that pays homage to this adored culinary staple. PastaBar features Moises's fresh, house-made pasta, each dish paired with delicious local ingredients when possible.

While the restaurant itself isn't necessarily an Italian restaurant (some of the flavors in the pasta dishes aren't traditionally Italian at all), it does pay respect to pasta's birthplace with its use of red throughout the clean-lined and uncluttered dining room. A few funky contemporary portraits decorate the walls for good measure, and each place setting is decked with a package of breadsticks to nibble on before the first course arrives.

Before we jumped ahead to the pasta plates on the menu, we ordered a few salads to start with. The medley of local lettuces, lemon and olive oil might have read a bit boring, but this salad was no snore.

It was utterly fresh and flavorful. The starter of buffalo mozzarella, heirloom tomatoes, anchovies and basil pesto was just as delicious. The tomatoes offered big pops of brightness, and we couldn't divvy up the melt-in-your-mouth mozzarella fast enough. Since we knew pasta, pasta and more pasta was ahead, we stopped ourselves from ordering bread with which to sop up every bit of the basil pesto.

When it came to choosing our pasta dishes, we opted for one simple-sounding variety and another more unique offering. The Bavette al Cedro was rounded out with lemon, Italian butter and Parmigiano cheese. The dish sported no frills, just straightforward tastiness. If we did want more substance, shrimp or calamari would make a great additive to the dish. (In addition to shrimp and calamari, diners can order sides like pork shoulder, lamb, sausage and, of course, meatballs alongside their pasta.) Next up, the Fettuccini e Finocchio dish was a homerun helping of pasta, fennel pesto, raisins, pine nuts, hot peppers, lemon and anchovies. The meal not only looked pretty on the plate—the colors were very enticing— but it showed off both savory and sweet flavors and diverse textures (i.e., the crunch of the pine nuts; the gumminess of the raisins). But perhaps the most refreshing thing about PastaBar's entrées is the serving size. It's all about quality instead of quantity, as each portion offers plenty to fill you up without inducing a carb coma.

The dessert menu also has a flair for the Italian. Diners can spoon up a refreshing granita in several rotating flavors. The espresso option was rich thanks to the strong coffee flavor, but was not heavy.

We also enjoyed the incredibly refreshing limoncillo cheesecake, capped with candied lemon peels. The slice was light-as-air and produced a little pucker, which nicely balanced the sweet peels on top. The only negative part of our visit to PastaBar? The regular cardboard box variety of macaroni or angel hair is no longer going to cure our pasta cravings.