

zuzanna's gourmet

Survey says: Zuzanna's is a must

By TRICIA VANDERHOOF
SPECIAL TO RANDOLPHROXBURY
THIS WEEK

For a chef who celebrates authentic, traditional, European-style family cuisine, Zuzanna Baranski is always on the cutting edge. Her latest success was achieved as the subject of a business research project.

Three scientists sought a small business for the purpose of applying research methods to solve a stated problem: to improve a new small business. They chose Zuzanna's Gourmet.

The comprehensive report (more than 100 pages) was published in November and presented at Picatinny Arsenal. Research entailed extensive comparison to comparable neighborhood businesses and included numerous areas of measurement and evaluation, including quality, service, price, selection and management.

It also contained results of customer surveys. With 5 as highest, how did Zuzanna's rate? Quality: 4.94. Service: 4.97. Price: 4.7. Choice/selection: 4.57.

Would customers recommend Zuzanna's to friends? Of 37 respondents, 36 voted an unqualified "yes."

This is a business that is run well, run personally by Zuzanna and husband Andrzej, with food selected and prepared by someone who knows how to do it.

Zuzanna or Andrzej greet customers with a smile from behind the counter, Zuzanna dressed in her white executive chef's coat. She has the credentials.

"I have a culinary degree from The Institute of Culinary Education in Manhattan," she says. "And I did a year's apprenticeship at Jean-Georges."

Part of a close family, she learned to cook growing up in a small town in Poland.

"European cooking is a balance of sour and sweet," she says. "Every weekend, one of us took turns in the kitchen to prepare the entire meal. Food was always my passion."

For her homemade braised brisket with mushrooms and caramelized onions, marinating starts the night before. Pierogi probably are the best-known of all Polish foods. These semicircular dumplings, stuffed (in this case) with potato and cheese, can be enjoyed as a main dish, side dish or snack. They're one of Zuzanna's specials every Thursday (six for \$3.50, a dozen for \$6.75), and they freeze beautifully.

With a successful catering business, the Baranskis decided to open Zuzanna's Gourmet in August 2008.

"At the beginning, new customers were a little unsure to try my food," she says. "Everyone trusts us now, and when we introduce something new, people are anxious to try."

Her most recent menu addition is organic quinoa salad. Zuzanna prepares hers with sesame sugar-snap peas and house vinaigrette (\$7.99 per pound).

Pronounced keen-wah, quinoa is close to being a perfect food source. This seed of a leafy plant related



Zuzanna Baranski is the proprietor of Zuzanna's Gourmet on Route 10 West in Randolph.

to spinach is wheat- and gluten-free, 12 to 18 percent protein and ideal for vegetarians, vegans and people with food allergies. It has a nutty, smoky flavor and is less filling than other grains and pastas.

Another healthy choice is Soba Noodle Salad in sesame vinaigrette with radish and scallions (7.99 per pound). Soba are dark Japanese noodles made of buckwheat and wheat flour, about as thick as spaghetti.

"But you can eat almost anything if it is prepared properly and with healthy ingredients," Zuzanna says. Her turkey-jalapeno meatballs have surpassed her conventional meatballs in popularity.

Zuzanna's house chicken salad is exceptional —

spicy and sweet, prepared with red peppers, celery and a honey-mustard vinaigrette. Panko-crusted chicken breast with fresh ginger has become one of her most popular dishes. If you'd prefer fish, take home the Panko-crusted salmon fillet (\$18.99 per pound).

Sometimes featured is stuffed cabbage filled with rice and beef. In Polish called "glumpkies," these are known in America as cabbage rolls.

Zuzanna's full-service catering has expanded: "We have picked up a lot of pharmaceutical and corporate accounts from Succasunna and Randolph, and we deliver to Morristown, Chester and Mendham. We get raves. Many have become individual custom-

ers."

Students from County College of Morris drop by with friends for hot or cold wraps or sandwiches, dinner or soup — or sometimes just a snack of tea or coffee with a cappuccino brownie or pecan square.

Expect generous portions: "If you eat only half of my 8-inch sub — closer actually to 10 inches — you won't need to eat again for at least half a day," she says.

Zuzanna makes her own fresh mozzarella. Her homemade marinara sauce prompted one customer to declare hers the best lasagna he'd ever tasted.

"We are now booking for Passover," she says. From the a la carte menu, order appetizers (perhaps chopped liver, haroset,

ZUZANNA'S GOURMET

ADDRESS: 1152 Route 10 West, Townline Plaza, Randolph

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 973-584-5858

FAX: 973-584-5088

CUISINE: European meals home-cooked from scratch every day, including soups, salads, desserts, extensive selections from the freezer and sandwiches (including Boar's Head deli)

SPECIALS: Distinctive variety daily

HOURS: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday; Sunday for catering pickup only

PRICE RANGE: Sandwiches/wraps, \$6.49 to \$7.49; soups, \$3 to \$4; paninis, \$6.99; take-out and salads: \$6 to \$10 (sold by the pound); hot and cold entrees, \$6 to \$10; coffee/tea, \$1.25; cappuccino brownies, \$2.99; coconut macaroons, \$12.99 per pound

CATERING: Full service, all occasions, home-cooked to order

CORPORATE ACCOUNTS: Our specialty

GIFT CERTIFICATES: Yes

PAYMENT: All major cards

PROPRIETOR/CHEF: Zuzanna Baranski

PARKING: Ample lot at Townline Plaza

ATMOSPHERE: Cheerful, welcoming, delightful people

TAKEOUT: Full menu, generous portions, scrumptious home-made food

WEB SITE: www.zuzannas-gourmet.com

matzo balls), side dishes, salads, entrees. In addition to brisket are maple-glazed turkey or roast chicken with apricot-rosemary glaze. And, of course, those desserts.