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Farm-fresh pasta done to perfection in SoNo

Jarret Liotta

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Meri and Bill Erickson of New Canaan present a tray of fresh pasta at their new specialty shop, PastaPresta, at the SoNo Marketplace on May 9, 2013, in South Norwalk, Conn. Photo: Jeanna Petersen Shepard



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It may seem like a simple food item, but properly made fresh pasta is a dynamite treat, especially if there's care taken with the ingredients. Now, thanks to PastaPresta -- a new specialty shop at the SoNo Marketplace -- Fairfield County foodies will get the chance to taste some real clever noodles.

Bill and Meri Erickson, of New Canaan, have taken their passion for food -- as well as their myriad experiences living and eating in Europe -- to market. Partnering with Mario Cavestany, a friend based in

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Madrid, Spain, they've not only brought the first Italian-made Pastation pasta machine to the U.S., but are incorporating the magic of farm-fresh ingredients to make a kind of pasta that heretofore would be virtually impossible to purchase in this area.

"Their pasta is absolutely amazing," said [Anne Tomaselli](#), of New Canaan, whose Italian family has been known to make their own. "It's made a huge impression on the family -- an Italian family that came over on a boat."

Bringing the flavor of Europe's marketplaces is part of what PastaPresta is trying to do, and the owners believe the SoNo Marketplace is the ideal forum.

"We got very used to shopping at the open-air markets every day," said Meri Erickson, reminiscing about the fresh produce and products they found abundant during their four years abroad, living mostly in Paris.

But since they came back, she said, her husband had often spoken of taking those fresh ingredients and offering people the best quality of fresh pasta. And now that's what they've done.

"For one thing, it's just a lot healthier than the dried pasta," she said. "It's higher in fiber. It's lower in fat. It's low in sugar. It's preservative free."

They've found a perfect distributor of farm-fresh eggs from cage-free chickens in New Hampshire -- "Easter eggs," Erickson called them, because the shells are a sage-green color, thanks to the chickens' diets of alfalfa, marigolds and whole grains.

"We use about a dozen eggs in 10 pounds of pasta, so you can really taste the flavor in the eggs," she said.

Depending on the batch being made, the Ericksons -- who are fast seeing PastaPresta become a family business, thanks to part-time help from their three sons -- will incorporate spinach, heirloom tomatoes, fresh herbs and more.

"We've been experimenting with cheese so far," she said of their ravioli production. "This weekend we're going to try wild spring mushrooms.

"The flavors are very subtle," she said. "We recommend that you don't put heavy sauces on it."

The shop also offers some sauces to go with the pasta, which includes linguini, fettuccine, casarecce and campanelle, among others. Visitors to the shop, which is at the front of the marketplace, can enjoy watching the pasta being made in the large sheets, which are also sold for lasagna.

"You can see them making it right there," said [Alexandra Lindner](#), of South Norwalk. "It's just so neat that it comes out of the machine."

Lindner said she's thrilled to have a store like this operating in a marketplace she finds an excellent addition to the city.

"I love that they use all fresh products, locally grown, organic -- all that fun stuff," she said.

She's also found the pasta a perfect hostess gift for parties, where people are overjoyed to receive a simple food made with such quality.

"You have faith that they've been exposed to more international type of cooking," she said of PastaPresta's principals. "We're just so excited that there are places like this. ... You feel like there's that European sensibility to what they're making -- a more refined way of looking at it."

PastaPresta, at the SoNo Marketplace, 314 Wilson Ave., South Norwalk, is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

[Jarret Liotta](#) is a freelance writer.

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