

## M'Tucci's Italian Market & Deli

It just doesn't get any better



**Forty-eighth visit: June 7, 2016**

**First visit: March 24, 2015**

There are dozens of delis in the Duke City. There are, to my knowledge, only two Italian New York style delis: [Tully's](#) and M'tucci's Italian Market & Deli (MMD). Tully's is a long-time favorite of mine, and prepares the best Italian Hoagies in New Mexico. I still go there to abate my hoagie craving. In late 2014, MMD arrived on the scene and took the city by storm. I discovered MMD last March (2015) and have been there twenty-seven times as of this writing. I guess that makes MMD my new favorite.

Lunches. Dinners. Wine pairing dinners (I had the Piedmont pairing, see below for some details). Meats. Cheeses. Salads like you wouldn't believe (the beet salad is insanely great). Fresh-baked breads. Every mouthful here is an OMG experience. Almost everything is hand-made.

MMD, a tiny place with 12 seats inside and about a half-dozen outside, is in a class all by itself. It has already garnered a substantial collection of regulars (most of whom recognize each other—it's that kind of place), none of whom would ever consider entering a fast-food joint.

The staff will usually know you by name after your second visit.

### Who are they

**Cory Gray – Executive Chef, and Shawn Cronin – Sous Chef**

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Cory Gray – Executive Chef

Shawn Cronin – Sous Chef

“Cory and Shawn had already collaborated for years, before the opening of M’tucci’s Market & Deli (MMD), and they are at it again as they bake, cook, age, and cure their way to creative culinary bliss.

“Prior to joining M’tucci’s, Cory was the Chef at Farina Alto in Albuquerque which he helped to open and where he began the meat curing program for their pizzas. Before Farina, Cory worked at the Artichoke Café for 6 years from 2003 and from there went to Farina and finally on to Farina Alto.

“Shawn came to MMD from Farm and Table where he was the Sous Chef. He went there from Farina Alto where he was Sous Chef. Before Farina Alto, Shawn worked at both Artichoke Café and Farina. ”



Jeff Spiegel & Katie Gardner — Owners and Operators

**Jeff Spiegel & Katie Gardner**

***Owners / Operators***

“Just two years ago, in 2013, Jeff and Katie decided to open another restaurant, this time in Albuquerque, a dramatic decision, having left behind the restaurant business in 2006, after 23 years and 11 restaurants in NYC. Now, fully committed to building their business in NM, the two, together with partner John Haas, have opened a restaurant, a market & deli and recently M'tucci's Cocina Grill at the National Hispanic Cultural Center. “We are building a retail food business here that we are defining by our commitment to perfection!”

## The Food

All the food is lovingly hand-made. Here is a sampling of some of my favorites. The scratch-made pastas are not floating in sauce, but are gently coated with some of the very best sauces in town.



Ziti and Pork

### Ziti and Pork

Later in this review I advise you to ask about the daily specials. This amazing dish is indeed special, and displays the talents of the kitchen.

Almost all Italian places prepare some version of Ziti, but none come even close to this. The pork is slow-cooked and very tender and tasty. The sauce is the thing here: Incredibly tasty. Beautifully herbed and spiced. MMD should bottle this for sale in the deli section.



## Peperonata Pasta

### Peperonata Pasta

Red bell pepper, garlic cream sauce. Optional: add MM hot Italian sausage or sweet Italian Sausage. Served over homemade pappardelle.

By all means add the sausage. House-made with just the right amount of aromatic fennel seed. [I keep this sausage in my home.]

This dish is a favorite of many of the regulars at MMD. Rightfully so. Mine, too.

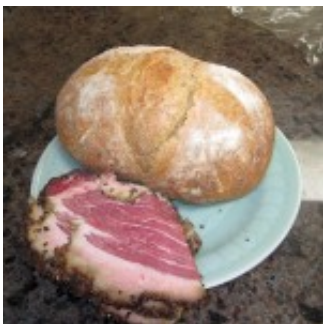


## Pastrami

### Pastrami Sandwich with Lentil Salad

MM pastrami, herbed goat cheese, fresh red onion, MM mustard, on MM rye

My favorite Pastrami in the Duke City. Juicy and fatty, the way it should be. No dried-out stuff here. This pastrami is on hand-made rye bread, with a hint of sourness. Delicious. The Lentil Salad (pickled onion, carrot, zucchini, rosemary, sage, thyme, Tucumcari gouda) is exemplary. Buy some to take home.



## Pastrami and Rye.

While you're at it, get some pastrami and a loaf of that fantastic bread.

Oh, what the heck: just buy a bag full of the goodies from the deli case. You may have to wait in line — it gets crowded with regulars. Just strike up a conversation. You will make a new friend.

### **Muffaletta with Orzo Salad**



Muffaletta with Orzo Salad

MM capicola, mortadella, salami, olive tapenade, MM smoked mozzarella, on MM ciabatta.

**From Wikipedia:** “The muffuletta is both a type of round Sicilian sesame bread and a popular sandwich originating among Italian immigrants in New Orleans, Louisiana using the same bread.”

OK, here I go again: This is the very best sandwich I have had in ages. Even though it is not served on the classic muffuletta (ciabatta is used here), it ranks right up there with the muffulettas I have had in New Orleans.

Orzo salad (roasted zucchini, roasted eggplant, roasted leeks, red bell pepper, fresh basil on tender orzo) is a fine accompaniment to this (or *any*) sandwich.



MMD Market Salad

### **M'Tucci's Market Salad**

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Romaine, arugula, giardiniera, salami, tapenade, goat cheese, candied walnuts, peppadew vinaigrette.

Wonderful. Half salad is enough for lunch. This is my second favorite salad at MMD.



Beet Salad

### Roasted Beet Salad

Beet Salad:

Local stout-balsamic vinegar reduction, braised beets, pickled red onion, watermelon-radish with local feta, butter leaf and frisee.

I would eat this stupefyingly great salad every day were in not for a medical condition that requires me to limit my intake of foods containing oxalates, which for me tends to create kidney stones (ouch!). One serving each month is safe for me, and I intend to have just that.



## Prosciutto-Wrapped Apricot Balls

### **Prosciutto-wrapped Apricots with 10-year-old Balsamic**

Make sure to ask your server about the daily specials, or you might miss out on a gem like this.

Shawn found some fresh, local apricots one morning and created this excellent appetizer. He wrapped the fruit with some 2-year-old prosciutto from the deli case and splashed the plate with some 10-year-old balsamic. Shawn's hunt was my good fortune. Terrific combination.

## **The Wine Dinners**

Once or twice each month Cory and Shawn put together a Wine and food Pairing Dinner. I was fortunate to get two seats for the Piedmont Pairing. Get your reservations (call MMD) early — these things fill up fast.



*Piemonte Regional Food & Wine Selection*

May 16 2015

1<sup>st</sup> Course      Stuffed 'Blanched' Onion with asparagus, house made mortadella, pinenuts, grana padano and golden raisins. Served atop White Bean Soup.

Wine   Alessandro Riveto Arnesis-Langhe, 2013

2<sup>nd</sup> Course      Saffron Risotto Souffle with Coppa

Wine   San Silvestro Barbera-Piemonte, 2014

3<sup>rd</sup> Course      Duck Terrine with caramelized onion coulis and house grown mustard greens

Wine   San Silvestro Dolcetto— Monferrato, 2013

4<sup>th</sup> Course      Polpettini di Maiale—Pork Meatballs agridolce served in brodo

Wine   Giovanni Rosso, Langhe, 2012

Dolce   Tomma Della Rocca Panna Cotta with Fig compote and Hazelnut Brittle

Wine   Castellari Bergaglio 'Salluvi-Gavi, 2012





Bread and Oil



Stuffed Onion



Saffron Risotto Souffle with Coppa



Duck Terrine with caramelized onion coulis and house grown mustard greens



Polpettini di Maiale—Pork Meatballs agridolce served in brodo



Dolce Tomma Della Rocca Panna Cotta with Fig compote and Hazelnut Brittle

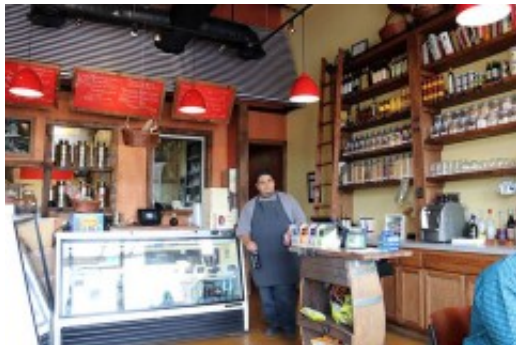
## **Epilog**

MMD is perfection in a small deli. And it has earned the #6 spot on my [ABQ Top Ten List](#).

During the last several months, I have come to expect the unexpected. Cory and Shawn are experimentalists, constantly honing their prodigious talents. I eagerly await my next visit where I expect to be blown away by something new and fabulous. Come and join me. You, too, will get hooked, which is a good thing. And remember that good things come in small packages that belie their brilliance.

## **What Others Are Saying**

Two of my favorite foodies weigh in on MMD:



MMD Interior

### [Gil Garduño](#)

#### **—New Mexico's Sesquipedalian Sybarite**

“The hard-liners among us will never accept that Schlotzky's, Jason's, McAlister's and others of that ilk are delis despite what their signage may say. Nor will we ever be duped by the deception of diners daring to call themselves delis. It goes without saying that we don't believe a deli should feature products burnishing the labels of Oscar Mayer, Hormel, Kirkland, Butterball or even the ubiquitous Boar's Head. An authentic deli should preferably cure, salt, dry and cut its own meats and make at least some of its cheeses—and if it doesn't do that, it should procure and sell only the finest, most authentic meats and cheeses available.

“With the December, 2014 launch of M'Tucci's Italian Market & Deli, Albuquerque once again has an authentic Italian deli in the tradition of delis for which hard-core deli aficionados have pined for far too long. It's a deli in which I'd proudly break bread with Dave Hurayt, Bruce Schor, Bob Sherwood and Gary Feaster with whom I've commiserated about the absence of an authentic deli in Albuquerque. Best of all, it's a deli with a pedigree that promises authenticity and deliciousness.”



The Charcuterie Board is one menu choice at M'Tucci's Italian Market and Deli on the West Side. (Adolphe Pierre-Louis/Albuquerque Journal)

**Andrea Lin —**

[Albuquerque Journal](#)

“Don’t overlook the condiments: onion jam, tomato relish, mustard and more – perfect for smearing on the bread in between bites of charcuterie.

“The rest of the menu veers toward the prosaic-sounding like salads and pastas – the caveat is that they’re made with M’Tucci’s’ impeccable deli ingredients. I love the Beet Salad (\$6 half, \$11 full) and its braised ruby veggies, pickled onions, feta and housemade vinaigrette.

“Because this is a deli, there are, of course, sandwiches galore from classic Cubano to a southern Muffaletta (\$11) stuffed with three meats, olives and smoked mozzarella on their ciabatta.

“Honestly, the pastas here are fantastic and it takes discipline to work through the menu rather than just having your favorite every time. Before leaving, don’t miss the deconstructed Cannoli Pila (\$6) for dessert, a stacked sweet pile of ricotta, cherries, and crunchy shell. Magnifico!”



**M’ucci’s Italian Market & Deli**

**(505) 639-4819**

[M'tucci's Italian Market & Deli Map](#)

**[Paradise Hills](#)**

6001 Winter Haven Rd NW,

Albuquerque, NM 87120

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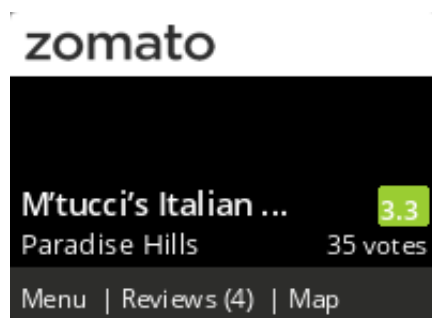
Don James eats well at M'Tucci's Deli

Hours: Mon – Sun: 11:00 am – 8:00 pm

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