

Little Original Joe's Brings Unpretentious Italian-American Fare To San Francisco's West Portal Neighborhood



Chelsea Davis Contributor ⓘ

Dining

I cover food, drink & travel—in other words, all the fun stuff!



Little Original Joe's spread of Italian food EMMA K. MORRIS

Earlier this year John & Elena Duggan, the brother sister team behind Original Joe's North Beach and Westlake, opened [Little Original Joe's](#), a

takeout and delivery only concept in West Portal with a focus on what they do best: pizza, pasta, and parmigiana.

For people that don't know much about the history of Original Joe's, Original Joe's first opened in 1937 at 144 Taylor Street in San Francisco. Even then it offered a similar, welcoming experience to what guests can expect today from any of their three locations —unpretentious Italian-American fare in a comfortable yet upscale atmosphere.

It was at this first location where the true hospitality and welcoming spirit synonymous with Original Joe's was born. The restaurant flourished for decades, establishing itself as one of San Francisco's most beloved spots.

Original Joe's is a family-owned and operated business that has been passed from generation to generation. John and Elena Duggan operate Original Joe's North Beach and Westlake, two locations that continue to flourish in their respective communities, along with the recently opened Little Original Joe's. This is the first offshoot of the Original Joe's brand located in San Francisco's charming West Portal neighborhood.



Outside Little Original Joe's LITTLE ORIGINAL JOE'S

Little Original Joe's offers traditional Italian-American cuisine. Popular items include a selection of pizzas such as The Spicy Mike with olive oil, spicy soppressata, calabrian chili pepper, asiago, oregano; The Italian Job with tomato sauce, mozzarella, sweet italian sausage, ricotta, broccoli rabe, chili oil; Harry The Greek with tomato sauce, mozzarella, rotisserie chicken, feta, baby spinach, grilled artichoke, pepperoncini, kalamata olive, sundried tomato; and the California Dreamin' with bbq sauce, mozzarella, smoked gouda, bbq rotisserie chicken, pickled jalapeño, red onion, cilantro.



The Spicy Mike with olive oil, spicy soppressata, calabrian chili pepper, asiago, oregano. LITTLE ORIGINAL JOE'S

Other mainstays include Spicy Rigatoni Vodka with marinara, cream, vodka, red pepper flakes; Joe's House Made Ravioli classic meat sauce, parmesan; Spaghetti & Meatballs classic meat sauce, parmesan; and Baked Lasagna house made pasta, classic meat sauce, ricotta, mozzarella, parmesan.

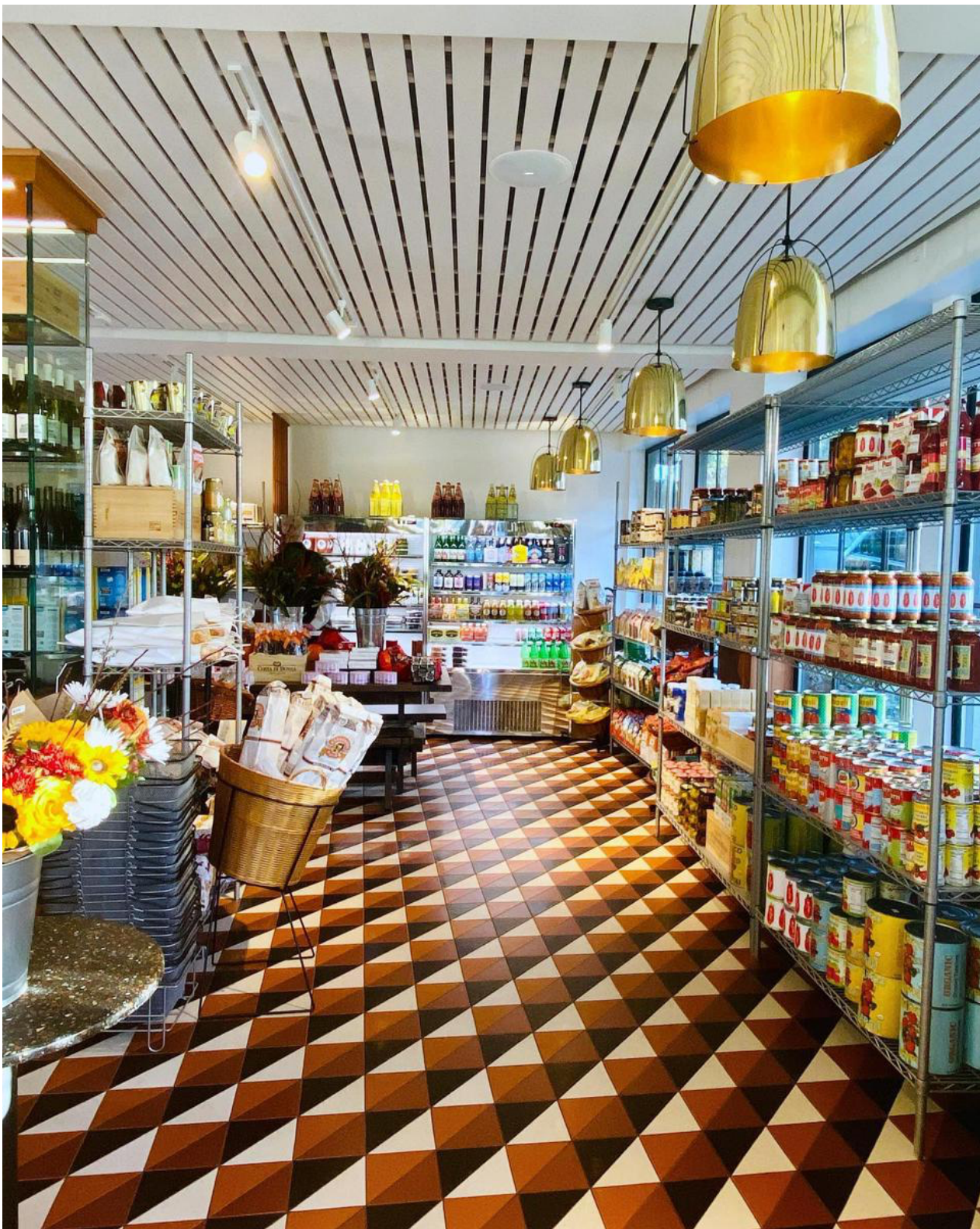
Little Original Joe's also features a charming Italian market with a

selection of ready-to-cook, house made favorites from Original Joe's; a variety of Italian, American, and locally made specialty items; and a selection of wine and beer.

We chatted with Elena Duggan, Co-Owner of Little Original Joe's, on pandemic pivots, the menu; and Original Joe's legacy and more. Here's what she had to say.

Was the pandemic the catalyst in opening this location or was this always in the works? Are there plans to transition to a sit-down restaurant post-pandemic?

We had been working on Little Original Joe's well before the pandemic hit and initially planned to operate a full-service restaurant in the space. Given the many challenges the pandemic presented, we ultimately decided to adapt the concept to meet the needs of our guests right now. We are focused on providing them the same comforting Italian-American food and warm hospitality that Original Joe's is known for, but to be enjoyed at home.



Little Original Joe's marketplace LITTLE ORIGINAL JOE'S

As part of the pivot, we also introduced a marketplace stocked with ready-to-cook, house made favorites from Original Joe's, a variety of Italian, American, and locally made specialty items, and a selection of wine and beer. The market seems to have been the missing element in this

neighborhood, especially given the overwhelmingly positive response we have received so far. We are humbled by the community's support and do not plan to replace the market with dine-in service any time soon.

Talk about the menu. What are some standouts and specialties?

Like Original Joe's, the culinary program focuses on traditional Italian-American cuisine with an emphasis on simple, comforting, and value-oriented dishes. The menu is centered around pizza, pasta, and parmigiana, featuring items like traditional American pizzas, which is exclusive to Little Original Joe's, a selection of house made pastas, signature Original Joe's parmigianas, and a variety of new staples, like Polenta Parmigiana, Garlic Parmesan Knots, and Chicken Wings.

The restaurant also serves Mary's Free-Range Rotisserie Chicken from a premium open-flame Rotisol Rotisserie, as well as organic soft-serve ice cream from the North Bay's Straus Family Creamery.



Chicken parmigiana EMMA K. MORRIS

What was the inspiration for the market? What can guests expect when visiting?

The addition of the marketplace stemmed from the success of the small grab-and-go setup we created at Original Joe's Westlake during the height of the pandemic. Our guests responded well to the concept, so we decided to expand it to Little Original Joe's in the space that would have been for dining.

Little Original Joes' robust marketplace is made up of various Italian-American specialty items, Original Joe's favorites, and beloved Bay Area products. Consistent with the restaurant's menu pillars, the market is centered around pizza, pasta, and parmigiana.



Eggplant parmigiana LITTLE ORIGINAL JOE'S

Items include fresh and frozen house made pastas and sauces, Original Joe's soups, salad dressings, desserts, and grab-and-go entrees, and other

prepared foods such as fresh cheeses, assorted cured meats, dried goods, condiments, sweets, and freshly bread from San Francisco's Boudin Bakery and Acme Bread Company.

The pizza is out of this world! What makes it so special (the crust is so good!)

The secret to Little Original Joe's pizza is the dough. Passed down from Sal Alioto, owner of Paradise Pizza which once occupied the space where Little Original Joe's is now, the restaurant's pizza program is centered around his legendary dough recipe. Since we grew up in the neighborhood and frequently visited Paradise Pizza as kids, we felt it was fitting to pay homage to Sal and continue his pizza legacy in the West Portal community.



PB&A with olive oil, mozzarella, prosciutto di parma, burrata, arugula, truffle oil. EMMA K. MORRIS

How are the other Joe's locations doing and are there any other ways you've had to pivot because of Covid?

The pandemic has had an incredibly tough impact on our restaurants, which forced us to be nimble and adapt, ultimately leading to our decision to re-concept Little Original Joe's. Despite the challenges and the continued uncertainty, it's clear that people respond well to comfort foods and that is what we're here to serve. We're giving people something to look forward to—good food that feels familiar.

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