

Scalini's Special Delivery

This restaurant's eggplant parmigiana spices up the waning days of pregnancy for moms-to-be.

A while back, Kristin Derenthal found herself among the miserable nine-months-and-counting crowd. Six days past her due date, the pregnant second-grade teacher set aside the proverbial pickles and ice cream in favor of the eggplant parmigiana at Scalini's.

To hasten motherhood, Kristin scarfed down the spicy \$9.95 dish at the Cobb Parkway restaurant in Smyrna. At least 15,000 other desperate mothers-to-be have done the same since Scalini's opened in 1980.

For Kristin, helping Mother Nature required a second helping. "I went on a Sunday night, and then I went back the following week and ate it again," she recalls. "Two days later, I had the baby." That 48-hour time frame earned newborn Lily Derenthal official membership in Scalini's Second Generation Club. In unofficial parlance, Lily remains now and forevermore a



above: These expectant moms confidently swallow the legend of Scalini's eggplant parmigiana. "I believe it because our customers do," says John Bogino (left) with his son Bobby. Both women delivered their babies within 48 hours after eating this meal. left: Scalini's famous entrée features layers of eggplant, ricotta cheese, marinara sauce, and mozzarella cheese.



"Some almost believe they're not going to have their babies until they eat the eggplant."

John Bogino, cofounder and co-owner of Scalini's

“Some women grab you by the tie and say, ‘I want to have this baby now!’”

Bobby Bogino, general manager of Scalini's

Scalini's eggplant baby. Eventually, when her busy mom gets around to sending in a photo, Lily's image will join a sea of smiling baby pictures on display at Scalini's.

Restaurateur John Bogino conceived the reportedly labor-inducing eggplant recipe decades ago when he first entered the food business. With advice from his immigrant

parents, John created all of the delectable dishes served at his popular Italian eateries, which now include two Scalini's and nine Previno's locations. In true urban mythmaking fashion, however, gestating women fixated on the eggplant entrée. They believed that the dish alone held the magical power to bring their babies into the world. ▶



The lore about Scalini's eggplant dish inducing labor in very expectant moms proves quite a veggie tale.

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A wall at the restaurant showcases babies born within 48 hours after their mothers dined on the fabled dish. The 330-seat eatery caters to pregnant women and families. Dating couples as well as celebrities also like the cozy alcove areas, some with privacy curtains.



Proud mothers display their proof that Scalini's eggplant parmigiana worked for them. These children are lifetime members of the Second Generation Club.

Overdue Credit

"I wish we could take credit for it, but it wasn't even our idea," says John's son Bobby Bogino, who serves as the restaurant's general manager. Instead, mothers with newborns in tow first pointed out the phenomenon to the Beginos.

"It was all their idea," says John. "You can get eggplant parmigiana in any Italian restaurant, but, for some reason, there's the belief in this one, especially at Scalini's in Smyrna." He laughs and adds, "Some almost believe they're not going to have their babies until they eat the eggplant."

Bobby attests to that. "Some women grab you by the tie and say, 'I want to have this baby now!'" he says. "Some of them are laughing—but some of them are desperate."

Doctor, Give Me the News

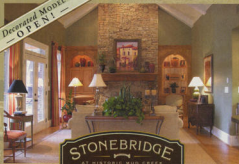
Because there's no confirmed scientific link, that air of despair among

overdue women probably motivates some in the medical community to prescribe a visit to Scalini's. "A lot of the women that come in here are referred by their doctors," confirms Bobby. It's mind over matter, the expectant moms believe, coupled with

With or Without The Baby

Visit Scalini's at 2390 Cobb Parkway in Smyrna. The restaurant opens for dinner at 4:30 p.m. daily. Prices range from \$8.95 to \$14.95, with salad and garlic rolls included. Call (770) 952-7222. Reservations are suggested for parties of six or more (excluding women expecting sextuplets).

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"I went on a Sunday night, and then I went back the following week and ate it again."

Kristin Dwenthal, Scalini's customer

Great Expectations

Pregnant women make the pilgrimage to Scalini's not only from the Atlanta area, but also from other Georgia cities and even other states, mostly Alabama and Tennessee. John also receives eggplant e-mails from women in England, Canada, and even South America who are past their due dates. "Can you mail it?" the women implore. Nope, postal rules prevent emergency eggplant deliveries. But Scalini's happily sends a condensed version of the vaunted recipe upon request.

"We have to tell them that it doesn't come with any guarantee," says John. "I guess we should put a disclaimer on the menu." Still, moms-to-be continue to put their faith in the power of the purple pod dish.



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a willingness to try anything to prompt their babies into the world.

The typical husband, catering to his hormonally charged wife, usually dismisses the eggplant premise. "My husband, Bruce, didn't think it was going to work," says a smug Kristin, "but he went along with me anyway." She adds wryly, "He would do whatever I told him to at that point." As happened with Bruce, the skeptical father-to-be often becomes a believer when he finds himself draped in sterile garb, exhorting Lamaze instructions at the hospital

within 48 hours of the couple's eggplant excursion.

Special Delivery

On occasion, Bobby, 27 and single, has come too close for comfort to the whole miracle of birth. "Since I've been here, I've had two women go into labor," the younger Bogino says. The first woman didn't belabor the point; lickety-split, she phoned her firefighter husband's colleagues. In record time, lights flashed and sirens wailed at Scalini's front door. No doubt a relieved Bobby waved a

happy good-bye as she sped away.

The second laboring customer calmly informed Bobby that her water had broken. "I asked her, 'What do you want me to do?'" he recalls. Nonchalantly, she replied, "Could you box up my food to go?"

NANCY DORMAN-HICKSON



Bringing Up Baby

A plaque titled "Second Generation Club" explains the premise to Scalini's customers. "If you are nine months pregnant and you are ready to deliver," it reads, "eat the eggplant parmigiana. Wives' tales have it that this dish induces labor. If your child is born within 48 hours of eating at Scalini's, he or she will be automatically registered as a lifetime member of Scalini's Second Generation Club. All club members are entitled to a free dinner for Mom and Dad and a special Scalini's baby T-shirt."

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