

## Local **Business News**

Old world style deli  
comes to Port Dover

# Chef Anthony has created 'Imaginations'

By LYN TREMBLAY

If this was a 'scratch and sniff' newspaper, there would be no need to write this article. You'd be able to follow your nose to Port Dover's latest food stop, 'Imaginations'.

In fact, it's hard not to start to salivate the minute you open the door of the shop owned by Chef Anthony and his wife Mary Anne Billingham. On the day of this reporter's visit, pot pies were being prepared and the homey cooking smell wafted into the street.

Opened just three months ago, the couple say they have already built up a regular customer base. Some simply visit everyday just to pick up a banana or two from the fresh produce stand. Others seek out the specialty items that fill three freezers in the small store located at the corner of Main and Market Streets across from the Lighthouse Festival Theatre.

The labels on the frozen products, made with what Chef Anthony calls "real food", provide a hint of where his talents might have been honed geographically. Items such as Spanish Creole sauce, Mari-

nara sauce and Lobster Bisque were among his renowned specialties created as a chef at Miami Florida's Prince Hamlet Restaurant, Gus' Clam House and Cherrystones in Pampano Beach (where he could cook for 700 people on Mother's Day) and the Palm Gardens Café in the Florida Keys.

Chef Anthony (as he likes to be called) has been cooking since he was 17 years of age and apprenticed in the 1970s and 1980s under Cordon Bleu Chef Richard Burns and Scandinavian Chef Jorgan Mueller.

He and his wife came to southern Ontario four years ago with plans to open a restaurant. "I imagined a lovely restaurant in a cozy country inn," he says.

Mary Anne, who has a brother in Brantford, scouted the area with instructions from Anthony "to find a little resort town near the water".

"Port Dover was exactly what we looked for," says the chef.

Once arriving in Port Dover and assessing what was already available as eateries in the area, the couple decided they did not want to compete with restaurants such as David's or



**Chef Anthony and his wife Mary Anne Billingham are owners of Port Dover's newest food stop 'Imaginations'**

the Belworth House (in Waterford). Nor did they want to compete with other eateries that were already established here. "We have bakeries and restaurants that offer soups and sandwiches. We have good shops already in town.

"We felt we should bring in something that is needed and wanted. We needed to offer number one -- food that was fresh and number two -- a variety," says Anthony.

Mary Anne, who works full time as a nurse at Hagersville General Hospital, calls their

business "an Old World Deli".

Chef Anthony says his biggest sellers are the Four Aces Lasagne, beef stew and Chicken Parmesan. All of his foods are prepared with natural ingredients.

Behind glass deli counters the couple offers up homemade salads for take-out. They include those made with salami, cheeses and sun dried tomatoes, pasta with chicken (poached and pulled), mayonnaise, celery and stuffed olives, as well as a seafood salad made with shrimp, scallops, mussels and

clams in a garlic-infused sun dried tomato vinaigrette.

The shop owners also proudly sell fresh meat products from local DeKoning Meats and VG Packers, cheeses made by Jensen's and breads and bakery items from Harmony and Courtland Bakeries. "These are the best the area has to offer," says Anthony. "We try to sell everything that is made in Ontario, if not Norfolk County."

The chef will also bring in any specialty items his customers request. "I carry a special mortadella for Father Pio (St.

Cecilia Catholic Church)," smiles Anthony.

The shop offers a full catering service and on February 1st will start hosting food seminars.

"The community has very much embraced us," says Chef Anthony.

Even the dogs like him -- he makes them special oatmeal, peanut and bacon biscuits!

By the way, the name 'Imaginations' came from John Lennon's song 'Imagine'. Chef Anthony confesses he is a Beagle-nut.