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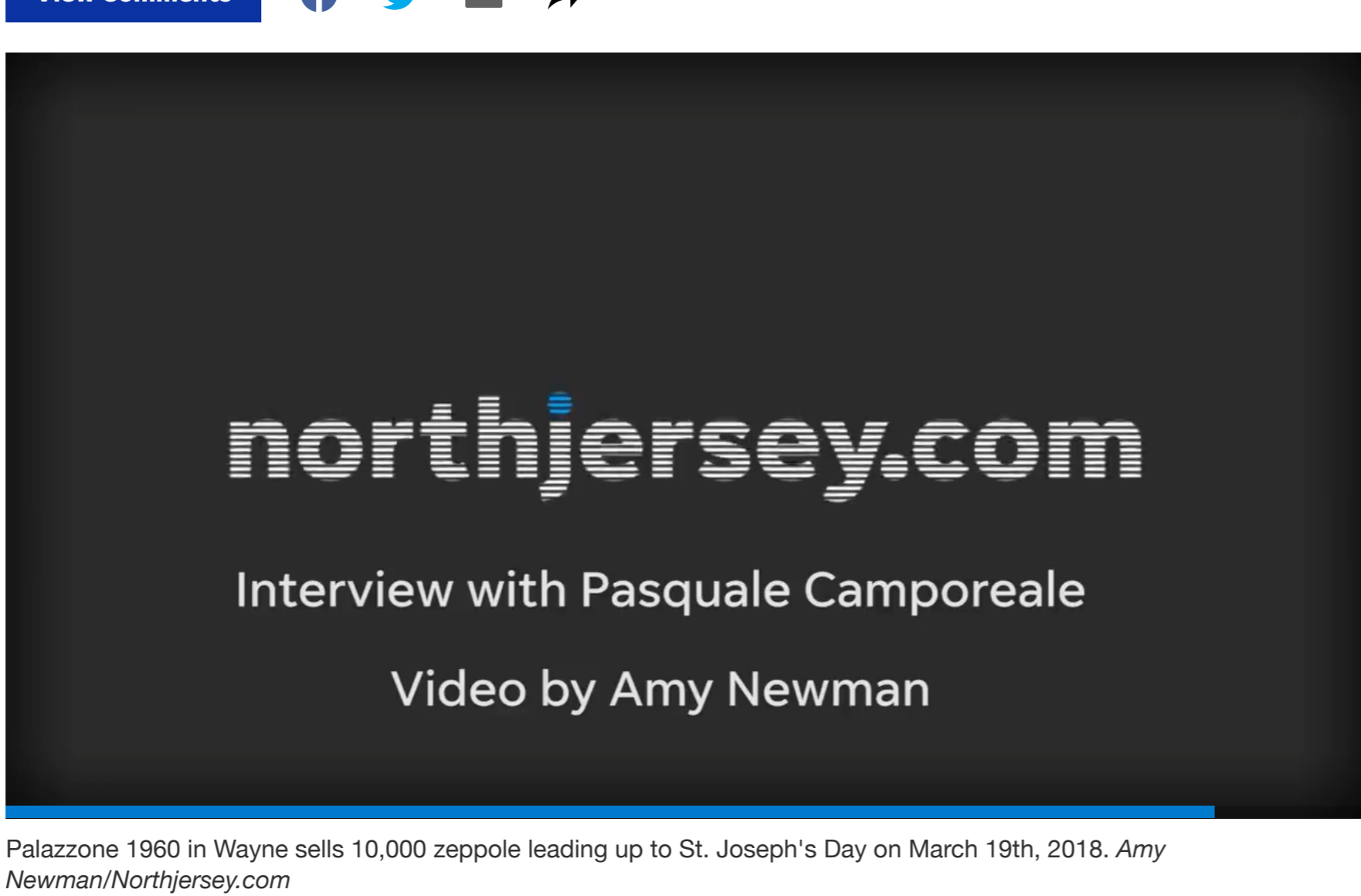
Bringing a taste of Naples to Wakefield with Neopolis Italian Emporium

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The Providence Journal

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Palazzone 1900 in Wayne sells 10,000 zeppole leading up to St. Joseph's Day on March 19th, 2018. Amy Newman/Northjersey.com

SOUTH KINGSTOWN — I came to [Neopolis](#) for the [zeppole](#). I stayed for everything else.

That includes the company of chef/proprietor Pasquale Illiano, whose roots in Naples, Italy, show in all he does. They are also evident on all the shelves and display cases.

At this Italian food emporium, most of the packaged products are imported, organic or artisan. He relishes telling customers about his exclusive line of jams and tomatoes grown in the rich soil by artisan farmers around Mount Vesuvius.

He shares his culture with the display of handmade market scenes. The presepio are Neopolitan creche scenes famous in the city. The ones at Neopolis show four food dioramas. They depict the food culture of Southern Italy with markets selling buffalo mozzarella, fresh bread, cured meats and homemade pasta.

All these things are at the market, as is so much more.

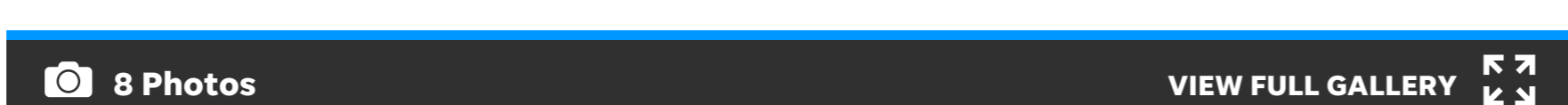
If you haven't caught on already, Neopolis is a treasure of a market where fresh and natural foods are the rule.

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Also ready to take home is homemade gelato, Roman [pizza](#), sold by the slice, prepared dinners and soups, unique cheeses that are vacuum-packed, artisan olive oil and freshly baked Italian pastries.

This market was opened in 2020, in the space that originally was home to [Pasquale's Pizzeria Napoletana](#), which he opened in 2015. When a larger space across the street was vacated by the closure of Shogun Steak & Seafood, he made the move to grow the pizzeria to 100 seats with a full bar.

The ricotta zeppole at Neopolis have mini chocolate chips and a cherry on top. Best to order ahead and not be disappointed when you arrive at the Wakefield shop. David DePaolo, The Providence Journal



Neopolis Italian Emporium brings the classics from Naples to Rhode Island

The owner of Neopolis shares his culture with the display of handmade market scenes.

Having a market and a pizzeria comes naturally to him.

Pasquale, 49, started cooking growing up in Naples with a little barbecue at his house. He learned to brush the chicken while it cooked. At 15, he got his first restaurant job and he loved it from the start.

Gail's Food Feed: It's all about pizza

He came to the United States in 1995 to visit friends on Long Island. He said he was in the right place at the right time when he was hired as cook in Virginia, and was sponsored by the restaurant owner for U.S. citizenship.

Pasquale Illiano brings the best of Southern Italy to South County Commons at his Neopolis food emporium. David DePaolo, The Providence Journal

His next stop was a restaurant in Connecticut, which led to Pasquale's first market in Westerly.

He still lives in Westerly with his wife, Roxanne, and their three daughters. But he left that partnership to open his Wakefield pizzeria.

In Johnston: Zeppole for all tastes at the Original Italian Bakery

The accomplished pizzaiola not only has VPN certification from Associazione Vera Pizza Napoletana, but he is also on the board of the association.

Among the desserts for sale at Neopolis is Pasquale's tiramisu, made with espresso coffee, not powder, and organic eggs and cream. It's a theme you hear over and over. The best ingredients make the best foods, he says.

The other desserts, including cannoli, sfogliatelle and frolla are made by baker Amy Lauria.

For a short time now, they have zeppole for St. Joseph's Day, March 18. They come with traditional pastry cream or ricotta. That ricotta is a blend of cheeses from Connecticut, Wisconsin and Campania, Italy. It's rich and delicious and also found in the cannoli. Order zeppole ahead or risk being disappointed.

The gelato is special too, hand-crafted with farm milk whenever possible, and organic eggs. And his mixture is always slow cooked before going into the ice cream maker.

Craving zeppole on St. Joseph's Day?: Try these 12 can't-miss bakeries

There's a helpful staff ready to explain everything, including Adamo DeFelice, who some will remember from L'Artisan in Providence.

Frolla and sfogliatelle are made fresh to sell at Neopolis. David DePaolo, The Providence Journal

What's that on the Roman pizza in the middle? Neopolitan bacon - ciccioli - and potatoes.

Roman pizza, with a long dough fermentation time that creates a crispy and flavorful crust, is sold in assorted varieties by the slice. David DePaolo, The Providence Journal

They bring in bread from A&M Bronx Baking each day. It's baked in Pawcatuck, Connecticut.

A long refrigerated case holds the cooked dinners, packaged in metal containers, ready to warm up in the oven. Many serve two, such as the chicken Parmesan that holds two large, beautifully pounded and breaded cutlets. There are many choices from lasagna and eggplant to chicken piccata and marsala and a pork tenderloin dish. There are meatballs and veal dishes as well.

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Takeout cocktails are here to stay: Here are some of the best in Rhode Island

You can even buy his pizza dough, sauce and grated cheese to make a pizza at home.

He makes pasta here too, bronze-cut varieties made with organic semolina ready to go home with one of his homemade sauces.

Pasquale carries unique wines from Southern Italy as well. Like many of the items in his market, he knows the producers.

Pasquale Illiano likes the old-fashioned shape of bread made by A&M Bronx Baking in Pawcatuck, Connecticut. He brings it in fresh daily. David DePaolo, The Providence Journal

How could he not? It's his passion.

"When I travel to Italy, it's always food related," he said. "I visit farmers and build relationships."

His mission is to bring the beautiful foods of Southern Italy to Rhode Island. Mission accomplished.

"The minute this becomes a job, I will sell everything," he said.

Details: Neopolis, 60 South County Commons Way, Wakefield, (401) 854-0667, [neopolisri.com](#). Open at 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Open 12-5 p.m. Sunday. Closed Wednesday.

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