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Governor gets signature dish



Frank Becerra Jr./The Journal News

From left, Marc Sheridan and Ales Bellino enjoy a bowl of Lago di Cuomo soup at Via Vanti restaurant/cafe in Mount Kisco. The soup is named after Gov. Andrew Cuomo and a portion of the proceeds from the sale of the soup are going to the Food Bank of Westchester.

Via Vanti names new soup after Cuomo; food bank reaps benefits

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MOUNT KISCO — A local restaurant has come up with a quirky way to salute Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

Via Vanti, located in the Mount Kisco train station, this month started serving its "Lago di Cuomo" soup, named after the new governor who lives just up the road in New Castle.

Carla Gambescia, the business owner, calls the vegetable puree a "culinary salute" to the state's new chief executive.

"This was just inspired by fun

with the name and also just really wanting to say 'Good luck,'" Gambescia said. "He's got a big job in front of him."

The governor had a lot on his plate recently with his first State of the State address. It wasn't clear what Cuomo thinks of the soup bearing his name or if he's even aware of it. A comment about the soup was not immediately available from his press office.

Over the next couple months, Via Vanti is donating a portion of the soup sale proceeds to the Food Bank for Westchester, which is based in Millwood and distributes food to hunger relief organizations

across the county.

The soup is a mixture of green vegetables and comes complete with a crostini topped with goat cheese, chopped tomato and fresh basil.

"It's for diners of all dietary persuasions," Gambescia said. "It's vegan, nondairy and gluten-free."

The soup's name is inspired not only by the new governor but also by the real Lago di Como — or Lake Como — the stunning resort destination in northern Italy, according to Via Vanti. The restaurant opened in July 2008 in the space that once housed The Flying Pig and its name in Italian means

roughly the road or way forward.

The restaurant has been offering free samples this month, and people have been buying bowls of the green puree.

"It's rich. It's got a nice after-taste," said Marc Sheridan, a Mount Kisco-based attorney who was eating the soup during lunch recently.

Ales Bellino, a Bedford Hills resident, called the puree "very refreshing."

"I can't figure out all the vegetables in it, but it's wonderful on the palate," Bellino said. "I think the

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charity aspect is fabulous."

For every \$8 bowl of Lago Di Cuomo that's ordered, \$1 goes to the Food Bank.

"We really appreciate it. It's really very generous, particularly in this economy, for small businesses to step up and to help raise awareness and to support us," said Katy Flint Coppinger, the Food Bank's senior director of development.

Coppinger sampled the soup herself on a visit to Via Vanti with Jeanne Wilcox, the Food Bank's communications manager. Wilcox hopes the dish draws donations to the nonprofit.

"In Westchester, we have high taxes and high housing

costs, and those expenses are impacting people, working people," Wilcox said.

The Food Bank can get \$4 worth of food for every \$1 it spends because it buys wholesale and receives food donations, Coppinger said.

"Unfortunately, demand is up 30 percent for food," Coppinger said. "Most businesses you want your numbers to go up, except in our business."

Helping local food banks is a cause that is close, if not to the governor's, then certainly to his girlfriend's heart. Sandra Lee, the Food Network star who herself grew up depending on food stamps and welfare, has made bolstering food banks her signature issue.