

What's in a Name? How Area Restaurants Got Their Names

By Erin Mantz

You may eat there every Friday night, but did you ever wonder what 'raku' means? Or who Tommy Joe of Tommy Joe's restaurant is? Or that Clyde's was almost named Floyd's? The origins of restaurant names aren't always obvious, so we asked restaurant owners to fill us in on how they came up with the names.

Addie's

Jeff and Barbara Black were preparing to open their first restaurant in 1996, but something bothered Jeff about the name they were about to settle on: It didn't mean anything. One day, Barbara brought up his grandmother Addie, who lived in Texas, and suggested they "just name it 'Addie's.'" Jeff liked the sound of that; he'd always been close with his grandma.

11120 Rockville Pike, Rockville, 301-881-0081

Amici Miei

"Amici Miei" means "my friends," and *amici* aptly describes owner Roberto Deias and Chef Davide Megna. The Italy natives met while working at D.C. restaurant Arucola 12 years ago and discussed opening their own place someday. They went their separate ways, but kept in touch. When the time was right, they joined forces again and opened Amici Miei in December 2004.

1093 Seven Locks Road, Potomac, 301-545-0966

Caddies on Cordell

Owner Gabe Coulon recalls considering restaurant names when a friend's wife stated the obvious: "If you like to play golf, why not relate the name to the game?" She proposed "Caddies." Coulon thought "Caddies on Cordell" had a nice ring to it—and people would always know where to find it.

4922 Cordell Ave., Bethesda, 301-215-7730

Centro Italian Grill

In this case, the restaurant's location helped determine the name. "Centro" means "center" in Italian. "Our restaurant is in the center of downtown Bethesda, where everything is going on!" states owner Francis Namin.

4838 Bethesda Ave, Bethesda, 301-951-1988

Clyde's of Chevy Chase

In 1963, Stuart Davidson decided the Washington area needed a saloon, but he was torn between two names: "Clyde's" and "Floyd's." When he saw the logos, the curving bottom of the letter "C" caught his eye, and the name Clyde's won by a swoop.

5441 Wisconsin Ave., Chevy Chase, 301-951-9600

Flaps

Thirty years ago, a tree blew over in Bob Rood's yard in Potomac, and a neighbor came to help him chop it up. Over a drink afterward, the two of them came up with the idea of opening a restaurant. The space they selected was covered with airplane decor. Rood wanted to name the restaurant something that would go with the flying theme, so he wouldn't have to take all the stuff down. He also wanted a name that people could easily pronounce after a few drinks: "Flaps" fit both criteria.

10134 River Road, Potomac, 301-983-2660

Geppetto

One night in 1985, as co-owner Charles Lenkin was pondering names for his new restaurant, he read *Pinocchio* to his daughter. The Tudor houses and character Geppetto in the Italian fairy tale captured his attention. He'd found a name for his restaurant when he least expected to.

10257 Old Georgetown Road, Bethesda, 301-493-9230

La Ferme

When this restaurant opened on Brookville Road in 1930, the architect envisioned the inside as replicating a French farm. "La Ferme de Brookville" was born. Current owner Alain Roussel says that from day one, people who worked at the restaurant used "La Ferme" for everyday purposes because it was shorter and simpler. "La Ferme de Brookville" is still the official corporate name.

7101 Brookville Road, Chevy Chase, 301-986-5255

La Miche

"Miche" means small round loaves of bread. Ironically, it's French baguettes on the menu here! According to current owner Jason Tepper, the original owners back in 1979 were very into French bread. "They chose the name for the love of the bread!" Tepper exclaims.

7905 Norfolk Ave, Bethesda, 301-986-0707

La Panetteria

"La Panetteria" means bakery and owner Harry Khayami chose the name to convey a casual, comfortable eating place.

4921 Cordell Ave., Bethesda, 301-951-6433

Le Vieux Logis

The late Marcel Montagnier CK found his dream restaurant/inn in the Dordogne region of France (an area known for its food and hospitality). It was called Le Vieux Logis ("old lodge") and became his inspiration and name for his restaurant here.

7925 Old Georgetown Road, Bethesda, 301-652-6816

Ledo Pizza

According to James Beall, Ledo's president and co-founder Robert Beall's grandson, nobody remembers exactly how Ledo came about. His grandfather may have seen a word containing "ledo" on an ashtray and shortened it up to save money on the number of letters for the outside sign, Beall says. Regardless, Beall jokes that the letters of Ledo stand for "Let's eat dinner out!"

5245 River Road, Bethesda, 301-656-5336 and 10301 Westlake Drive, Bethesda, 301-469-6700

(Additional locations in Silver Spring, Rockville, Germantown and more)

Lia's

Geoff Tracy wanted to open a sister restaurant to his two Chef Geoff, D.C. locations. Since the Bethesda restaurant would serve primarily Italian cuisine, "Lia's as the second half of 'italia' just seemed right to me," Tracy says. "Lia's is as simple as that."

4425 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, 240-223-LIAS

Mamma Lucia

Bruno Fabi first learned the restaurant business by working with a friend's mom. In a show of gratitude years later, the "Mamma" in his Mamma Lucia restaurant is named after her - and because the old saying "nobody makes it like mom" rings true. Lucia is a true southern Italian name and was chosen to reflect the restaurant menu.

4916 Elm Street, Bethesda, 301-907-3399

14921-J Shady Grove Road, Rockville, 301-762-8805

12274-M Rockville Pike, Rockville, 301-770-4894

1302 East West Highway, Silver Spring, 301-562-0693

Meiwah

According to owner Larry La, the Chinese call America a "beautiful land." The adjective *mei* means "beautiful" and *wah* means China or flower, depending on how it is used. With "Meiwah," he expresses his belief that the two countries can do things together that are good for the whole world.

4457 Willard Ave., Chevy Chase, 301-652-9882

Mon Ami Gabi

French steakhouse Mon Ami Gabi is named after Gabino Sotelino, Mon Ami Gabi's founder, owner and executive chef. "Mon ami" means "my friend" in French, and "Gabi" is short for Gabino. In addition to its Bethesda restaurant, Mon Ami Gabi has locations in Las Vegas, Chicago, and Oakbrook, Illinois.

7239 Woodmont Ave., Bethesda, 301-654-1234

Persimmon

"Naming the restaurant was almost harder than naming a baby!" says owner Damian Salvatore, the father of three kids. He and his wife, Stephanie, tried to think of words that got people thinking about food, and came up with 10 possibilities. He had just worked at a restaurant that used persimmon and that word was fresh in his mind. It rolled off the tongue and was easy to remember.

7003 Wisconsin Ave., Chevy Chase, 301-654-9860

Positano Ristorante Italiano

Owner Jimmy Traettino's ancestors, as far back as 1232, were from Positano, Italy, a beautiful seaside town south of Naples. If the word "Positano" sounds familiar, you may recall author John Steinbeck's famous essay from the 1953 *Harper's Bazaar*, where he called Positano "A dream place that isn't quite real when you are there and becomes beckoningly real after you have gone."

4940 Fairmont Ave., Bethesda, 301-654-1717

Raku

One Japanese meaning of “raku” is enjoyment and pleasure—exactly what owner Marcel wanted to convey to his customers when they eat in his restaurant, where diners can feast on high-quality Asian food in a fun, casual setting.

7240 Woodmont Ave., Bethesda, 301-718-8680

redDog Cafe

When redDog owner John Emanuelson was in search of a name for his new restaurant, he didn't have look too far. Emanuelson's red Golden Retriever, Madison, was the inspiration for the name. Emanuelson needed approval from the Miller Brewing Company, who makes Red Dog beer, and he got it. It is also notable that two of his favorite restaurants were Black Dog of Martha's Vineyard and White Dog of Philadelphia.

8301-A Grubb Road, Silver Spring, 301-588-6300

Ri Ra Irish Pub

The Irish phrase “Ri Ra” roughly translates into devilment, fun or any social activity that involves food, a pint of Guinness or whiskey.

4931 Elm St., Bethesda, 301- 657-1122

Tako Grill

Although the sound of “tako” may bring to mind corn tortillas and meat, the word is actually Japanese for octopus, which not only has eight legs and can catch many things—it is considered good luck.

7756 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda, 301-652-7030

Tia Queta

As a child, Tia Queta owner Roberto Montesinos was not the only one who enjoyed his mother's fantastic cooking—she fed lots of kids and friends in the neighborhood. She was so well known that many people called her “Tia Queta.” Tia means “aunt” in Spanish and her first name was Enriqueta. Montesinos got such a kick out of her neighborhood nickname that he named his restaurant “Tia Queta.”

4839 Del Ray Ave., Bethesda, 301-654-4443

Tommy Joe's

As kids in bunk beds in their Kensington home, Matthew Haley made a promise to his younger brother, Tommy Joseph Haley: “If I ever open a restaurant, I will name it after you.” Years later, he did just that, when he partnered with Joe Lively to open “Tommy Joe's.” Today, Tommy recalls that as a kid, “Matthew always cooked – he was unbelievable!”

4714 Montgomery Lane, Bethesda, 301-654-3801

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Tragara Ristorante

On the Italian island of Capri, Tragara is a famous and well-loved road which leads to a view of

the Faraglioni, high cliffs that have been eroded by the sea and the wind. The word “Tragara” is part of many names on the island. Chef Michel Laudier visited Capri several years ago and walked down the road to view the rock formations. He attests Tragara is a good name for the restaurant, because he considers Tragara “the rock of Bethesda” and it brings a touch of Capri to Cordell Avenue.

4935 Cordell Ave., Bethesda, 301-951-4935

Trattoria Sorrento

Owner Giovanni De Simone’s parents started this family restaurant in 1991. The family comes from Sorrento, Italy, a small town redolent of orange and lemon gardens on white, steep cliffs overlooking the Bay of Naples.

4930 Cordell Ave., Bethesda, 301-718-0344

Writer Erin Mantz lives in Potomac.