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PERFECT RECIPE

Tamaqua restaurant chef's cooking videos go viral



Owner Alfi Picone adds sauce while preparing German stromboli for a Facebook video at La Dolce Casa — DiMaggio's in Tamaqua on Thursday. **PHOTOS BY MATTHEW PERSCHALL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER**

ARSON ATTACK AT
PA. GOVERNOR'S MANSION

SUSPECT PLEADS GUILTY

Sentenced to 25 to 50 years
in prison under plea deal

By Mark Scolforo
ASSOCIATED PRESS

HARRISBURG, Pa. — A man who scaled an iron security fence in the middle of the night, eluded police and used beer bottles filled with gasoline to ignite the occupied Pennsylvania governor's mansion pleaded guilty Tuesday to the attempted murder of Gov. Josh Shapiro.

Cody Balmer also entered pleas to terrorism, 22 counts of arson, aggravated arson, burglary, aggravated assault, 21 counts of reckless endangerment and loitering in the April 13 attack that caused millions of dollars in damage to the state-owned brick building.

Under a plea deal, Balmer was sentenced to 25 to 50 years in prison, far less than he could have faced if the case went to trial. He declined to address the judge about the crime, answering questions with short, simple answers.

Defense attorney Bryan Walk said Balmer "is taking full responsibility" and paying "a hefty price for a man who's 38 years old."

ACCOUNTABILITY
FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Shapiro said afterward that he and his family support the plea deal, and that it provides real accountability.

See **ARSON** on Page A4

MEDICARE

Open enrollment period starts today

By David Mowery
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Pennsylvania Department of Aging officials are reminding older adults that the annual Medicare open enrollment period begins Oct. 15 and ends Dec. 7.

Any new coverage selected or changes to existing benefits will take effect Jan. 1.

During the open enrollment period, new Medicare beneficiaries can sign up for Medicare prescription drug coverage and health plans to complement Medicare, and current Medicare beneficiaries can review and join, switch or drop Medicare Advantage or prescription drug coverage to adjust to their needs.

Officials said free, objective health benefits counseling through Pennsylvania Medicare Education and Decision Insight, also known as PA MEDI, is available at Pennsylvania's 52 Area Agencies on Aging.

Those counselors can assist with

See **MEDICARE** on Page A5

By Ron Devlin
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TAMAQUA — Move over, online Italian chefs, there's a new kid on the cooking show block.

Chef Alfonse "Alfi" Picone, owner of La Dolce Casa — DiMaggio's restaurant, has gathered a large following by cooking his signature Italian dishes on Facebook.

To be sure, he's not in a league with actor and master chef Stanley Tucci, whose "Tucci in Italy" show airs on National Geographic and is available on Disney Plus.

But for a one-man production in a small coal region town, the response to Picone's videos has been phenomenal.

He boasts 48,000 followers on Facebook, and his frequent videos are viewed by tens of thousands of people with an interest in Italian food.

In posts at La Dolce Casa (DiMaggio's) on Facebook, Picone cooks special dishes like Shepherd's Pie Pizza, Pepperoni Pizza Rolls and Cannoli Stromboli. Typically, they garner from 10,000 to 50,000 views.

Picone's Garlic Knot Pizza video went off the charts with more than 200,000 views, according to Facebook statistics.

Though he rarely talks while cooking, videos accompanied by brief explanations in text and music have become an innovative marketing tool.

A heart-shaped pizza accompanied by a version of Ben E. King's "Stand By



Picone props up his phone while making German stromboli at La Dolce Casa — DiMaggio's on Thursday. Picone films himself making various dishes for the restaurant's Facebook account.

*People say 'we've been
watching your videos, and
now we want to meet you.'*

— **CHEF ALFONSE PICONE**, La Dolce Casa — DiMaggio's owner

Me" turned out to be a Valentine's Day favorite.

Along with elaborate lighting displays for Christmas and throughout the year, the Facebook videos are drawing diners from Allentown, Scranton and New

Jersey, Picone says.

At a time when many restaurants are struggling, La Dolce Casa DiMaggio's is frequently crowded and at times the line of customers waiting to be seated extends onto the sidewalk in front of the restaurant.

In addition to drawing customers, the videos have made Picone a personality. His image has become the face of La Dolce Casa, and a photo promo of him cooking occupies a place at each table.

See **VIDEOS** on Page A4

Instagram says it's safeguarding teens by limiting them to PG-13 content

By Barbara Ortutay
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Teenagers on Instagram will be restricted to seeing PG-13 content by default and won't be able to change their settings without a parent's permission, Meta announced on Tuesday.

This means kids using teen-specific accounts will see photos and videos on Instagram that are similar to what they would see in a

PG-13 movie — no sex, drugs or dangerous stunts, among others.

"This includes hiding or not recommending posts with strong language, certain risky stunts, and additional content that could encourage potentially harmful behaviors, such as posts showing marijuana paraphernalia," Meta said in a blog post Tuesday, calling the update the most significant since it introduced teen

accounts last year.

Anyone under 18 who signs up for Instagram is automatically placed into restrictive teen accounts unless a parent or guardian gives them permission to opt out. The teen accounts are private by default, have usage restrictions on them and already filter out more "sensitive" content — such as those promoting cosmetic procedures. But kids often lie about their ages when they

sign up for social media, and while Meta has begun using artificial intelligence to find such accounts, the company declined to say how many adult accounts it has determined to be minors since rolling out the feature earlier this year.

The company is also adding an even stricter setting that parents can set up for their children.

See **INSTAGRAM** on Page A5



The Instagram logo is seen on a cell phone in Boston on Oct. 14, 2022. **ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE**

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