

PARK SLOPE

La Dolce Vita, Never a Hard Sell

MATTHEW GLASER, 12, and Zachary Fine, 13, have a lot in common — if not with seventh graders around the country, at least with each other, and certainly with the spirit of their neighborhood, Park Slope, long the stamping ground of the spiritually curious, the upwardly mobile and the gastronomically advanced.

So it is not surprising that on a recent Saturday afternoon, the two were doing their share to keep up the neighborhood's reputation. They had set up shop on Third Street, a few blocks from both the Park Slope Co-op and the bustle of hipper-than-thou boutiques and restaurants on Fifth Avenue, to sell their homemade panini to passers-by.

Matthew stood behind a table next to a cardboard sign reading "Panini \$3," while Zachary stretched out on the sidewalk, lazily plucking his sitar.

"This is an up-and-coming neighborhood," Matthew said by way of explaining why the pair were selling panini rather than a more mundane item like, say, lemonade. "And it's only getting fancier."

Apparently there was a market, albeit a modest one, for their offerings.

"You don't see kids selling panini very often," said Karen Miller, owner of Boing Boing, a maternity wear shop on Sixth Avenue at Union Street, who came upon the stand

when she was trolling local stoop sales.

"They were very businesslike," she added. "It was very sweet."

The panino stand was the latest in a long line of entrepreneurial activities undertaken by the two boys in seeking to appeal to the demographics of Park Slope. On another recent weekend, Matthew could be found accompanying Zachary on his sitar with a djembe — an African drum — for tips outside an ice cream shop on Seventh Avenue. That evening, the pair performed at the Cocoa Bar, a new wine and gourmet dessert bar on the next block.

Matthew also regularly bakes mint chocolate brownies for the Cocoa Bar. "Sometimes I use mix," he acknowledged, "but a few times I home-made them using fancy mint and chocolate bars from the Met market."

By day's end, the boys' first attempt at a Park Slope panino stand was a culinary and popular success, though not a financial one. During the two and a half hours the stand was in operation, the pair sold 17 to 20 panini. After reimbursing Matthew's father for supplies, the boys netted approximately \$1 apiece. But they have not given up on the idea.

"Of course we'll do it again," Matthew said, "when it's nice weather and it's a Sunday, because, you know, Zach has sitar lessons on Saturdays." JOANNA EBENSTEIN



Young capitalists, Matthew Glaser, left, and Zachary Fine, hawking panini in style near Seventh Avenue.