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The Washington, DC metro area's magazine for music, entertainment, nightlife and culture.

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Food & Drink

Pizza Four Ways

[Don't you hate when you follow a friend's restaurant recommendation, and the "amazing" burger they told you about tastes like cardboard to you? We hate it, too. People's tastes are different. And forget about restaurant reviews. Half the time, we frankly have no idea what they're talking about (we've yet to discover how



"sophisticated" can legitimately be used as an adjective to describe how something tastes). So, we've decided to try something different. Four reviewers, one food. Real people. Like you. Sharing the places they go to in language that makes sense. One of them is bound to be your taste bud soul mate.

The Gourmet

Lisa Lindberg, 25, Legal Assistant
Ella's Wood Fired Pizza

For those of us who prefer pizza with a splash of syrah rather than a pint of Pabst, Ella's Wood Fired Pizza near Gallery Place is a warm and friendly place to grab a meal. The menu, much like the atmosphere, blends simplicity and fun. The brick oven aroma and a red-checkered tapestry are reminiscent of a classic pizza parlor, while the sizeable wine rack and turquoise accent walls indicate something more modern. Pizza is the restaurant's main focus, and offerings like the Di Mare, a thin crust topped with shrimp, pesto, pine nuts and roasted red peppers, or the Lombardi, with caramelized onions, gorgonzola and rosemary, are an exciting change from the standard cheese and pepperoni. Meat-lovers will crave the Soppressata, which combines sausage, shaved fennel and roasted peppers in a sassy spicy-sweet combination. And, any visit to Ella's requires a stop at the bar for a drink and some witty banter with Chris, the bartender; the bar's got an extensive, moderately priced wine list with most offerings by the glass. And the martini selection will have you and your friends raving. Skip the lemon wafer and have a white-chocolate martini for dessert. 901 F St., NW, 202-638-3434.

The Cheapskate

Monica Hesse, 24, Journalist
2 Amys

New Reader Posts

- 12/21 John Creamer & Stephane K @ Five
 - "Barack The Caucus" Watching & VA/DC/MD Primary Kickoff Party
 - Bluegrass-Sat night (12/22) @ Tiffany Tavern!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
 - "BEST of BOTH WORLDS" NEW YEAR'S EVE at RNR Bar!
 - Buy 2/9-2/10 On Tap Ski Trip to WISP b4 fri for early bird discount!
 - On Tap's CD Release Party at Continental on Jan 12th at 8pm! No cover!
 - IOLE! ! live rumba and flamenco
 - Icon California vs Icon Italian Wine Dinner - January 29 2008
 - Winter Austrian Wines at the Austrian Embassy - January 24
 - 12/14 HECTOR ROMERO (Saw Recordings) @ FIVE
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NFL TICKET AND COLLEGE GAME PLAN



Just for a minute, I'm going to show my true colors as an uncultured hick from Iowa and say that the best pizza in this town or any other is Papa John's. Seriously. The crust is chewy, the sauce is plentiful, and a large costs nine bucks and comes with that quickly congealing garlic butter sauce. If you're ordering in, Papa John's is the way to go. But, let's assume that what you want is not only good pizza, but also a dining experience. Let's assume you want to eat something that actually feels like food, not just a grease injection. In that case, you must go to Glover Park's 2 Amys. This is pizza the way Italians meant it to be—wood-fired with simple, hearty ingredients. Try the Norcia, which comes with salami, sweet peppers, garlic and mozzarella. And save room for dessert: the restaurant's homemade ice cream has flavors you won't find at Baskin Robbins, like the chocolate barley malt or chocolate chip pistachio (I can't even type out the lip-smacking sound I'm making right now.). As a date spot, 2 Amys gets a thumbs-down. It's insanely loud, and you'll never find parking. Better to go at an off-time, after lunch or before the dinner rush, and take public transportation; the 30, 32, 36, 90, and 92 lines all drop you off near the restaurant. 3715 Macomb St., NW, 202-885-5700.

The Adventurer

Carlos Queiros, 25, Editor

The star-nosed mole can discover and devour food in 300 milliseconds—faster than the human eye can perceive. When I visit Alberto's pizzeria—a Dupont hole-in-the-wall—I am often as hungry as that mole. And though the pizza is always more than worth it, the wait sometimes makes me want to pull my fur—er, hair—out. I burrow down the nine steps leading into the take-out joint, past the "Warning: May Be Habit Forming" sign. But unlike a mole, I can talk, so I will now cast off this strained metaphor, and tell you about the best pizza in the city.

At Alberto's, you can build your own pie. My personal favorite is a Chicago thin crust pizza with five toppings: roasted chicken, fresh roma tomatoes, green peppers, white onions and fresh basil. The classic TBH (tomato, basil, garlic) is also fantastic. On a recent visit, I placed my order at 7:15 and waited a full half hour (enough time for eight pies—for pizza-by-the-slice purchases—to appear behind the white tiled counter) for my pie to come through. I salivated. I tapped my feet. I considered eating the tile. But when the pizza finally arrived, I realized that I've been making a mountain out of a molehill (sorry, couldn't resist); after the first bite, the wait seems entirely appropriate.

They say the proof is in the pudding, but in this case it is on the pizza. The 1/3" inch, square cut crust acts as a savory serving tray for the fresh toppings. The "prime topping" basil is worth every cent. I see the sign's warning manifest itself when—only halfway through the pie—my friend suggests we order another one right now. "The crust is tasty. Thin, but not brittle like a cracker," says my other friend. Satiated, we buff our bellies, burp, and gear up for another wait. 2010 P St., NW. 202-986-2121.

The Classic

Joy Hopkins, 28, Non-Profit

Cleveland Park Bar and Grill is a friendly, warm (sometimes too warm, thanks to the oven!) half-bar/half-restaurant, and a great spot for pre- or post-movie dining, with the Uptown right across the street. I usually go for a Margherita (traditional red sauce and mozzarella) topped with sausage, black olives and mushrooms. Knife and fork are mandatory here. The crust is thin: crispy at the edges, chewier in the center, and there's never skimping of toppings. And, unlike some places where the sauce is an afterthought, these tomatoes are a featured ingredient. If you're more adventurous than I, you could opt for one of their more creative offerings like the Rosina al sole with Virginia baked ham, gorgonzola, tomato and mozzarella (egg is an optional added ingredient, but I really can't condone that.). The gorgonzola is not overpowering, but adds great, unexpected kick.

Don't miss the apple pizza for dessert, featuring fresh apples, (skins still on!)

topped with a light caramel sauce. It's decadent, but not too sweet. If I lived closer I'd probably have one every day; as it is I'll probably have been back for another one by the time you read this. 3421 Connecticut Ave., NW, 202-806-8940.

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