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Basil Brick Oven Pizza and Gelateria

Basil Brick Oven Pizzeria is turning Astoria Boulevard, on its head with classic, Italian, brick oven pizza, pasta, panini, salads and more, and its adjoining café and gelateria. This is a cozy, family-friendly, date-fantastic place to enjoy a casual Italian meal made on the spot with the freshest ingredients. Indeed the brick oven is central to the restaurant and co-owner and Chef Daniele Barbos takes center stage as he lovingly makes each and every pizza right in front of you, on the spot. The result is pizza that has gotten mentions in *Time Out*, the *Wall Street Journal* and many popular food sites.

Owners and brothers Joe and Vito Giannola emphasize the freshness of their ingredients, many of which are on display in Daniele's kitchen and used in recipes he brought from his native Italy and artfully recreates here at Basil. Joe is a 50-year resident of Astoria, having come from Sicily way back when. He is also a property owner, resident and concerned citizen of Astoria who works tirelessly to improve the quality of life in

of wine and beer enhance the warm feeling you'll get at Basil Brick Oven Pizza and Gelateria.

We started with two glasses of red wine and a generous serving of super fresh mussels, made right on the spot in a chunky tomato and garlic sauce that begged to be soaked up with warm focaccia sprinkled with oregano (\$8.75). Shrimp scampi is another great starter to share or you may split an antipasto misto. This generous platter includes paper-thin slices of prosciutto di Parma, Portobello mushrooms, roasted red peppers, sun-dried tomatoes, Reggiano Parmigiano cheese and olives (\$11.50). A nice variety of salads is available including the classic Caprese composed of fresh, buttery mozzarella, juicy tomatoes, roasted red peppers and basil, drizzled with fine olive oil and balsamic vinegar reduction (\$7.50). We shared an insalata fresco tossed with tender greens, cherry tomatoes, red peppers and shaved Parmigiano with house made dressing. If you top this salad with grilled shrimp or chicken, you've got a light and healthy lunch.

Without further ado, I'd like to launch right into the pizza which is among the best you'll ever have. Thanks to the intense heat of the wood-burning, brick oven, Daniele's handmade dough cooks in just minutes, leaving crispy bubbles in the crust and a light, crisp bottom. This pizza stands up to the "three-glass test", where you place the pizza on top of three glasses. If it doesn't bend over the side, you know the crust is good! Just the right amount of toppings allows you to savor all the fresh ingredients and there are 34 impressive varieties to choose among, from the classic Margherita to the Porchetta topped with roasted pork and everything in between. These individual pies are 12" and perfect for one so everyone can have their personal favorite (from \$56 to \$14).

Surely we had to try the traditional Margherita, made in Napoli for its Queen, incorporating fresh tomato, mozzarella and basil leaves that reflected the colors of the Italian flag. I marveled at the freshness of the ingredients, in particular the huge, fragrant basil leaves that top nearly every pie. Quattro stagioni represents the four seasons with prosciutto, artichokes, mushrooms, black olives and cheese while the pear and gorgonzola offers the sweet and savory combination that many enjoy. The Sicilian eggplant is topped with fresh slices of oven-roasted eggplant, roasted garlic and Reggiano, making this a great option for vegetarians.



On the other hand, the Salciccia is topped with Italian sausage, fresh mozzarella, onions, peppers, Parmigiano and basil. You could eat at Basil every day of the month and try a different pizza each time. There's even a Nutella pizza which makes an excellent dessert or snack, according to my little niece and nephew who devoured one recently.

It starts with pizza but it doesn't end there. Basil's Panini sandwiches are made on homemade bread and require two hands, a fork and a knife to get at all the delicious fillings. My companion tried the Classico filled with prosciutto, arugula, mozzarella, Parmigiano cheese and a light drizzle of fine olive oil (\$9.25). The meatball sandwich is a Giannola family favorite filled with delicious house made, sliced meatballs and mozzarella. The Veggie is stuffed with the freshest zucchini, eggplant, mushrooms, artichokes, fresh mozzarella and fine olive oil for a healthy and satisfying handful.

One of their regular customers next to us enjoyed a plate of rigatoni pasta with filetto di pomodoro sauce, whose tantalizing aroma filled the air. Gnocchi are tender and toothsome topped with fragrant pesto, mozzarella and diced tomatoes. Penne alla Basil is their version of vodka sauce with a touch of cream, shallots, shiitake mushrooms and prosciutto for a unique sauce that will keep you coming back for more.

The adjoining Gelateria has its own entrance and serves Italy's famous ice cream treat, pastries, coffee drinks, and everything to satisfy your sweet tooth. You can stop in there any time for a delicious pick-me-up. All desserts are made in house and we sampled Chef Daniele's creamy tiramisu that is light, fluffy and not too sweet. The silky texture of the panna cotta complements your Italian meal perfectly, as does the crème caramel. Top off your meal with a rich Italian espresso and a digestif such as grappa or Limoncello.

Basil Brick Oven Pizza and Gelateria is a welcome

**BASIL BRICK OVEN PIZZA
BASIL CAFÉ AND GELATERIA**

28-17 Astoria Blvd., Astoria
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addition to the neighborhood with its classic Italian pizza, Panini, pasta and gelato for everyone. Stop in soon or place an order on-line with free delivery and see what makes a meal here so special. The service here is friendly, kind and attentive and families are welcome. Buon appetito!



the neighborhood. Basil is a welcome addition as it provides top-notch Italian dishes at very reasonable prices, and free delivery.

The brick oven warms the dining room, along with exposed brick walls that have been carefully restored and adorned with antique mirrors. Rough hewn wood floors and sturdy tables fill the expanded dining room which will hold about 50 people, and an outdoor deck is being planned that will overlook the neighboring gardens. Soft lighting, soft music, and a nice selection

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