

CHOW

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## Basil Brick Oven Pizza in Astoria

Just two days ago I was lamenting the lack of decent pizza as a reaction to getting a slice of a overly thick dough artichoke slice from the place called "Artichoke" down near W 4th street. There were no real artichoke, only a hint of the tartness from the marinated artichoke....bleh.

Yesterday, I needed to make my Greek Olive Oil trip to Astoria for a 3 litre can. Living on the upper upper westside the M60 bus is the straightest and quickest way to Astoria.

As with most of my lucky chow times it was for no particular reason that I strolled down Astoria BLVD before going to Titans for my olive oil. I passed by Basil Brick Oven, where there was a sign out front saying "Opening Soon". It looked nice and airy inside. I continued on quite a ways looking for I don't know what before turning back this way again.

I poked my head in to see if there's a menu. Two women sitting in by the window sharing a pizza. Oh, so they're open then? The mystery. I went up to the counter and asked. No menu yet. The tall young man said I could have whatever pizza, he'd make it. He rattled off some combo..."Wait, you have mussels?! Is it fresh? OK, that's what I'll have then...how much is it?" I asked. Somehow there wasn't a clear answer. I thought ok, let's wait and see.

I saw the portioned doughs and the mozzarella cheese and how he worked the dough so expertly before I headed to my table.

The pizza came (see pic). Probably the freshest mussels I've ever had. They are not the large and rubbery kind, but small and juicy and really, fresh, as he'd said. My reason for preferring clam over mussels in general has at that moment become non-reason. I carefully drank the juices off of the shells. Simple preparation of garlic and basil, and wine. The tomato sauce is just right, bright and cheery and not over powering.

By now, I realized that this place is not officially opened, yet. It's sort of a dress rehearsal and I was just lucky to be walking by. I had wanted to taste something with cheese on it. so, I asked for one with arugula, mozzarella, and mushrooms. Lightly sauteed shitake mushroom with some crisp edges, just right amount of mozzarella (which I learned later the chef makes in store fresh daily!), and ample fresh baby arugula. (see pic). As with the previous pizza, I love how the sauce and juices of the ingredient are well balanced with the olive oil so that it's wholesome and balanced without being greasy or watery.

I found out that the chef, Danielle, makes his own dessert there, too. A slice of Tiramisu was offered. I couldn't turn it down. It was light and aromatic, and just the right temperature. I asked about the fragrance, but the chef says he doesn't use liquor for he wants the kids to be able to eat it. It's coffee he said. Pressed for more reason, he said, 'It's fresh!' Yeah, that's one magic wand that coupled with simplicity does wonders.

Well, I had asked about what coffee they serve there after finding out the chef is from the Piedmont area. I was hopeful... and Yes, it's Lavazza! An espresso was brought to me. One sip and I remembered one of the few times when espresso isn't bitter, it was when I visited Santa Margherita long ago, near Genoa. It was full of flavor: the reason I'd always bring back bricks of Lavazza D'oro by when I visited Torino. I'm sure it was also enhanced by the Tiramisu i'd just had. All around a delicious meal!

I left wishing them much luck though I know they'd do well if they continue to offer quality food like this.

They have a website already, just waiting for everything in store to get set up online for "seamless web"(? its' the first I've heard of this). "Official grand opening?..Maybe Wednesday ....."

I'll be back. It will be before my next Greek Olive Oil task is due, I'm sure.

[Basil Brick Oven Pizza](#)

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 By [HLing](#) on Jun 14, 2011 10:52 AM

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