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By [Arielle Silverman](#)

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Basil Brick Oven Pizza: So Much More than Your Average Pizza Joint

Tucked away in a corner of Astoria, *Michelin rated Basil Brick Oven Pizza* is much more than its name would suggest. It is not your average NYC pizza joint, but a small family owned "home-style" Italian restaurant with a wonderful menu filled with pastas, salads, antipastos, fish dishes, desserts and of course pizzas. These are not your everyday pizzas; many are covered with homemade mozzarella, fresh ingredients and creative sauces ranging from tomato to spiced pumpkin walnut to asparagus.

Brothers Joe and Vito Giannola first opened the restaurant with the idea that it could become a neighborhood spot with a real feeling of community and since they first opened their doors, it has become just that, an area favorite with lots of loyal customers. With its warm atmosphere and gracious hosts, it is easy to see why.

The growing success of Basil speaks for itself as the restaurant prepares for its second major expansion. In an area surrounded by beer gardens, the brothers look to compete with an impressive outdoor patio with will boast an additional one hundred seats. Wine and pizza outside on a hot day, yes please!

With the expansion comes a whole array of new menu items. I was lucky enough to join many local foodies and bloggers for a grand preview of some of the new items that will soon appear on their menu.

Despite being a vegetarian, I was more than accommodated for as several of the beautifully prepared courses were vegetarian friendly. Furthermore, my gracious hosts were more than willing to prepare a couple of their delicious items without the original meat ingredient. The evening accounted for too many entrees to discuss them all but here are some of the highlights.

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The first item I tried was a **spinach and fried goat cheese salad** in an orange vinaigrette. The bright green spinach leaves rested on a bed of thinly sliced apples and was garnished with candied walnuts. The seemingly simple dish was zesty, refreshing and I just couldn't get enough. It was a crisp and wonderful start to the meal.

My companions began their meal with the octopus, clams and meatballs. The Octopus came out as a thinly sliced mosaic of meat. Unlike most octopus which is chewy, I am told this was melt in your mouth good.



Several other dishes came out alongside the salad including **meatballs covered in warm goey cheese and marinara sauce**, Baked Clams, Fried Calamari rings with carrot and zucchini ribbons and a fra diavolo dipping sauce, and cabbage risotto.

Next up were the pasta dishes.





The bright green **vegetable lasagna** was melty, rich and delicious. It was creamy but not too heavy and flavorful but not overpowering.



Also veggie friendly was the **Spinach gnocchi with pesto, tomato, and gorgonzola sauce**. The dish was a smoky flavor that took a few bites to get used to. Gorgonzola is not usually my favorite, but a few morsels in I was hooked. I would not let them take the plate away. I spent the next 20 minutes sporadically eating them one by one until I had single handedly finished the entire plate.



For the meat eaters, **lobster ravioli** with chopped shrimp in tomato cream sauce was served. Over and over I was told that it's a shame I wouldn't eat the ravioli because of how amazingly delectable it was.





After the pasta came the meat entrees; **crowned lamb chops** served with grilled vegetables, pork loins with apple and bacon, and grilled salmon.

At the end of the night, two desserts were placed in front of us.



An **almond ricotta cheesecake** that was wonderfully light and nutty. I am not usually a dessert person, but this was light with just the right amount of sweet. A perfect end to the very large meal we had just consumed.



The second dessert was much heavier and more decadent than the first; a **chocolate filled crepe** covered in chocolate sauce, strawberries and whipped cream. Despite being a little rich, the flavors were delicious.”



All it all it was a wonderful night. My roommate—who has joined me for this exceptional dinner—and I leave tonight happy, full, and with plans to return again soon. Astoria is a neighborhood filled with great restaurants; however Basil is nothing short of a true gem. Basil Brick Oven Pizza really is a gem in a neighborhood filled with great restaurants.

Recommended.

Basil Brick Oven Pizza is located at 28-17 Astoria Boulevard in Long Island City, NY (718) 204-1205

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Rita Silverman

Fabulous Arielle...Very well done! Makes my mouth water and I definitely am going to try that chocolate crepe! YUMMY!

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