

[tastoriaqueens](#)

Occasional musings on my favorite meals and snacks in Astoria, Queens

To Change with Grace and Ease: Basil Brick Oven Pizza, if I Could be More Like Thee!

The first time I visited [Basil Brick Oven Pizza](#), it was just beginning to burst at the seams, with folks waiting out on Astoria Boulevard to get into the cozy little pizzeria with exposed brick walls, a fiery wood-burning brick oven, and a welcoming, gregarious chef. Over time, as an unabashed creature of habit, I chose my favorites – those dishes that I simply could not envision living in Astoria without. The unique, delicious **Pizzucca**, featuring an herbed pumpkin walnut sauce, homemade mozzarella, pancetta, parmigiano reggiano, and basil, is my go-to pizza. And Basil's famous **tiramisu** is one of my favorite desserts in town — and has been since my first visit when Chef Daniele, for no apparent reason, sent a free portion to everyone dining in the restaurant.



Basil's beautiful Octopus Carpaccio

Last May, I [attended a party](#) for Basil's expansion from a charming 15-seat hole-in-the-wall to a full-scale Italian restaurant that quadrupled in seating capacity and includes a cafe that serves gelato and coffee drinks. Amidst all of this change, however, Basil's impressive menu, created by talented Chef Daniele Barbos, and boasting panini, pasta, and more than 40 different pizzas, remained pretty much the same.

On Wednesday night I again had the honor of visiting Basil, thanks to an invitation from the restaurant's earliest and most vocal fan, local food writer [Bradley Hawks](#). He had assembled a group of local food writers for the unveiling of new menu items, the first major menu expansion since Basil first opened its doors. Chef Daniele's new menu is well-rounded, adding appetizers, entrees, salads and about **20 additional pizzas** to the menu, bringing the astonishing total up to over 60 different pizzas to choose from at Basil. For the newer pies, Chef Daniele has been experimenting with sauces far afield from the traditional red sauce, including **asparagus sauce**, **porcini mushroom sauce**, and **artichoke sauce** – all quite delicious. The new menu will also include several **focaccia pies** which we did not sample but will likely be a popular addition.

Other favorite dishes from the new menu include a rich, savory **potato-pesto lasagna** with fresh house made mozzarella cheese and a light sprinkling of breadcrumbs, with such depth of flavor that you won't miss the traditional meat, noodles or marinara one bit. Additional pesto, mascarpone, and marinara are served on the side, spectacularly arranged to look like the Italian flag. Two cephalopods stole the show on the appetizer menu: **crispy fried calamari** tossed with fried shoestring strips of fried sweet potato and zucchini and a visually stunning, refreshingly light and citrusy **octopus carpaccio**.

So what is next for what is next for Basil Brick Oven Pizza, a place that has already exhibited a remarkable ability to grow and change and be better for it each time? They plan to add two levels of outdoor seating – an outdoor patio with a fire pit and a sunken garden – which will add 100 more seats to this dynamic Astoria restaurant. And what is next for me at Basil Brick Oven Pizza? Perhaps I will take their lead and order something different next time.



Basil's delicious potato-pesto lasagna with an Italian flag of side sauces