

Vegetarian Astoria

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2011

Basil Brick Oven Pizza

There are many reasons why I could never leave New York. I hate driving, for one, and people everywhere else talk funny. But really, the main thing that keeps me here is the pizza. New York has the absolute best pizza in the world (I will entertain no arguments on this). And I'm happy to report that Astoria's Basil Brick Oven is keeping the bar high.



My pal the Upstater and I paid a visit to the tiny storefront on a sunny October Saturday. There are items on the menu besides pizza, of course – some salads and pasta – but we were on a mission.

Before I get into the toppings, let me say this: Basil Brick Oven's crust is perfect. You heard me, people: *perfect*. It's thin, not too salty, and neither too crisp nor too chewy.

I ordered the Pera (pear) & Gorgonzola because I will eat pretty much anything if you put blue cheese on it. If I had any gripes about this pie, it's that the pizzaiolo had a bit of a heavy hand with the fresh mozzarella. Amazingly, there is such a thing as too much cheese.



Pera & Gorgonzola

The Upstater, an admitted pesto fiend, had the Tricolore, which also featured tomato sauce, Buffalo mozzarella, and a dash of heavy cream. Again, the toppings were tasty, but perhaps too generous.

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The Tricolore

Each 12-inch pie was cut into four slices; the Upstater and I were full after eating two. (Yay, leftovers!)



The place seats about 10 people, tops, but it's cute and bright and the service is fast and friendly. Danielle, the Italy-born chef, graciously stepped to the side so I could photograph his pizza oven in all its glory.

I was so impressed by Basil Brick Oven that I had a few pies delivered for a small shindig the next day.

Unsurprisingly, the pizza wasn't as good as it was fresh

out of the oven – things got a bit soggy in transit – but it was still quite delicious. We particularly enjoyed the Veggie Italiana, a vegan-friendly pie topped with slices of grilled eggplant, zucchini and roasted red peppers. And then there was the Pizzucca – oh, the Pizzucca. If you hold the pancetta, it's an autumnal vegetarian delight: that fabulous crust topped with a savory walnut-pumpkin purée and parmigiano reggiano. The memory of this pizza has been haunting me for days.

Pizza in general will keep me in New York. Basil Brick Oven just might keep me from fleeing to Brooklyn.

Basil Brick Oven Pizza

28-17 Astoria Boulevard

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Food quality



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