

# Pizza Turncoat

In New York, the term *deep dish* represents betrayal

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Illustration by Kyle T. Webster

I have a secret. Apart from a few misguided years lost in other locales, I have lived the last two decades in New York City, which even by the standards of the harshest metric makes me a New Yorker. I have learned opinions concerning optimal bagel schmear. I know that Kevin Plawecki is the backup catcher for the New York Mets. I have even been to Staten Island. Twice.

And, of course, I have my favorite New York pizzeria: Juliana's in Brooklyn, which is run by Patsy Grimaldi, the coal-oven demigod who previously founded the famous pizza chains Patsy's and Grimaldi's. Due to business disputes with his partners, he can no longer use either name. But when your pie causes this sort of litigation, you must be doing something right.

Anyway, like I said, I have a secret: About a decade ago, I spent a summer in Chicago. During that time, I sampled the weird creation known as the deep-dish pie, with its flaky bowl of crust laden with absurd amounts of cheese and topped with a layer of chunky tomato sauce.

New Yorkers are brutally dismissive of Chicago-style pizza. They call it sacrilege. They call it lasagna. They call it everything but what it is: freakin' delicious.

My budding addiction to the stuff became a problem when I moved back home. Like authentic New Mexican green-chili stew, the deep-dish pizza pie is one of those food specialties attempted with little gusto outside of its place of birth. Back in traditional-pizza heaven, I chomped my way through five boroughs of lovingly crafted, doughy, flat pies sporting relatively reasonable amounts of cheese.

But deep in that highly active part of my brain where pizza desires are stored, there was unrest — and I couldn't shake it. I wanted to taste that flaky Chicago crust, to pull off that athletic maneuver where you lift a slice over your head in order to extricate the springy strings of glorious, melted mozzarella from the mother pie, to afterward feel that languid fullness which must be Mike Ditka's daily state.

I was a few years into such empty longing when I realized during some hungry Web browsing that my two favorite Chicago deep-dish purveyors FedEx their pies.

Since then, I have learned that I am not alone in my secret. There are many New Yorkers with a taste for deep-dish, and we gather in small, furtive groups in my apartment. Of the Chicago powerhouses, I am loyal to Lou Malnati's Pizzeria, while my wife is fervently pro-Giordano's, but that is a marital dispute too personal for this page, and either way the custom is the same: We place one frozen pie after another in the oven, and they come out steaming and gooey as our cabal discusses, in hushed tones, the beautiful food product of a city that is, in all other regards — let's face it — deeply inferior.

At Juliana's I greet Patsy as innocently as ever, though sometimes I wonder if he sees the betrayal in my eyes.

## Joe Murray

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