

## GUIDE

## The Essential Guide to Brooklyn Pizza

BY GEORGIA KRAL | NOVEMBER 15, 2016



Brooklyn is home to hundreds of pizzerias, from classic corner slice shops to historic coal-burning icons. And adding to the already long list of beloved pizzerias, Brooklyn has experienced a second wave of pizza dominance: new-school spots placing a premium on quality dough and local ingredients, and in turn added a new and delicious dimension to the pizza scene. Old or new, we think that you need to know (and eat) them all. Put this list in your back pocket on your next BK pizza crawl.



### Old-school

#### Juliana's

Patsy Grimaldi is behind this DUMBO pizzeria, a revival of his original business Grimaldi's. The story is circuitous but the gist is this: After running Grimaldi's in the same location, Patsy sold his business to travel with his wife. When the restaurant space (with its coal oven) became available again a decade later, Grimaldi decided he missed the business and wanted to return to pizza as a way of life. He reopened Grimaldi's as Juliana's in 2012, named after his mother, and the owners of the Grimaldi's name moved their pizzeria next door.

Juliana's serves classic, thin-crust pies made simply. The tomato sauce sings of pure tomato flavor because nothing is added to it. The tomatoes are sourced from Italy.

**Must-order:** For first-timers, get the Margherita pie. Return guests should try the roasted peppers, sweet and savory at the same time, or the #1: a white pie with scamorza affumicata, mozzarella, pancetta, scallions and Oregon-grown white truffles in olive oil.

*19 Old Fulton Street, Brooklyn; 718-596-6700*



*Flickr/Steve McFarland*

#### Di Fara

Since opening in 1964, Dom DeMarco has handmade every pie at his cult Midwood pizzeria, finishing each with a few snips of fresh basil. Watching the master at work is like stepping into the Brooklyn of the past.

"When I went to Di Fara's I was in awe. Just seeing that guy make pizza, me and my business partner kinda just sat there, our mouths open, just staring," said Sean Berthiaume, co-owner and pizza maker at Vinnie's in Williamsburg.

"The way he took pans out of the oven with his bare hands, he just like took hot pans out! He's been doing it so long. We just sat there like 'Oh my god I could watch this all day.' A hero in action."

Inside the no-frills space, there is nothing going on here beyond pizza eating. Di Fara is as known for its long waits as it is for its slices, but here's a tip: If you get there before it opens at noon, you should be OK.

The sauce, made with San Marzano tomatoes, is tangy and salty, the cheese (mozzarella and Grana Padano) just thick enough and the toppings thoughtful. While some people visit Di Fara and order multiple pies to go, the pro move is to order a few slices with a group of friends, eat quickly and leave. Since it tends to be crowded, you won't want to linger.

**Must-order:** A plain square (Sicilian) slice

*1424 Avenue J, Brooklyn; 718-258-1367*

#### Totonno's

Another classic coal-oven pizzeria like Juliana's, Totonno's was opened out in Coney Island by a Lombardi's alum in 1924. And like Di Fara, to visit Totonno's is an historic trip. Come for the pizza, but absorb the ambiance too. Tip:

Make a day out of a trip to Totonno's because they close when the dough runs out, not at a set time.

The thin-crusts of the pizzas here have a slight spring to them, but the underside is nicely charred thanks to the coal oven.

**Must-order:** Two pies (because you're likely taking a long train ride home): plain with tomatoes and mozzarella and another with your favorite topping.

*1524 Neptune Avenue, Brooklyn; 718-372-8606*



*L&B Spumoni Gardens/Facebook*

#### L&B Spumoni Gardens

The square Sicilian pies here are so iconic that "L&B style" is used by competing pizzerias in an attempt to sell square pies. But what makes the Sicilian pizza here so essential? There are a few factors: the seasoned pizza trays, used so many times that they give the crust a real depth of flavor; the tangy and sweet tomato sauce, and the cheese-under-sauce technique, which helps keep the crust moist.

Round pies are on the menu, but aren't nearly as essential.

**Must-order:** An entire tray of Sicilian slices. You'll thank yourself later.

*2725 86th Street, Brooklyn; 718-449-1230*

#### New-school



*Courtesy of John von Pamer/ Franny's*

#### Franny's

The Brooklyn pizza scene wouldn't be what it is today without Franny's, where the pies are cut into slices tableside with giant scissors. Married couple Francine Stephens and Andrew Feinberg opened their wood-fired pizza restaurant in 2004 (for context, that's four years before Roberta's) on Flatbush Avenue in Prospect Heights. They have since moved locations and opened another restaurant and then sold it, but the pizza at Franny's has been consistently great.

"Basically we're all grandchildren of Franny's," said Matt Hyland, co-owner and chef at Emily and Emmy Squared.

Wood-fired and Neapolitan in style, Franny's capitalized on two hit-making notes: The restaurant made delicious pizza at a time when pizza wasn't "hip," and the owners lived by the very Brooklyn locavore ethos that was the thing in the early 00s. In 2016, Franny's has stayed true to its mission.

"We never skimp on sourcing and using the highest quality ingredients," said Stephens, who added they did not consider themselves "part of the pizza renaissance."

"Pizza has always been and will always be our favorite food to eat. That's why we chose to make it our life's work," she said. "We happened to break into the business at the right time when there were not a lot of new pizzerias."

**Must-order:** The white clam pie with chile and parsley

*348 Flatbush Avenue, Brooklyn; 718-230-0221*

#### Lucali

Though a relatively new business, Lucali rides the line between new- and old-school. Styled after the pizzerias (and pizza) of his youth, owner and pizzaiolo Mark Iacono opened this tiny eatery on a sleepy stretch of Carroll Gardens in 2006, where he also grew up. The thin-crust, wood-fired pies are simple: dough, sauce, mozzarella and basil. There are no reservations, no takeout and no quirky toppings. Iacono was also notoriously involved in a knife fight on a sidewalk in Carroll Gardens in 2011. Both Iacono and the other man refused to testify against each other, and the charges were dropped.

Lucali is also known for its long waits, as well as attracting celebrity patrons like Beyonce and Jay-Z. Iacono also recently opened a second location in Miami Beach. #Goals.

**Must-order:** The plain pie and the calzone: notoriously gooey and with sauce on the side.

*575 Henry Street, Brooklyn; 718-858-4086*



#### Emily and Emmy Squared

Husband-and-wife team Matt and Emily Hyland have hit it big with their creative takes on two distinct pizza styles. First came Emily, a tiny pizzeria in Clinton Hill with a wood-burning oven. It was a quick hit, thanks to the couple's unique take on both Neapolitan/New Haven-style pizza and hospitality. Just two years later, Emmy Squared opened in Williamsburg. A love-letter to Detroit-style pan pizza, the newcomer offers a style of 'za not readily found in the borough or even New York City.

"Pizza is a lot of fun, that's really the impetus [for us]," Hyland explained. "[We thought] let's do pizza and make it fun and local and delicious."

Creative toppings are what set both pizzerias apart. Take, for instance, these items: banana peppers, havarti cheese, tomatillo sauce, honey-poached figs. Ranch dressing also shows up at both spots, demanding to be taken seriously.

"People who live by rules of pizza, they don't have any fun in their lives," Hyland said.



*Photo by Clay Williams*

**Must-order:** The Emily, with mozzarella, pistachios, truffle sottocenere (cheese) and honey (Emily); the Roni Supreme, with tomato sauce, mozzarella, pepperoni and Calabrian chiles (Emmy Squared)

Emily: *919 Fulton Street, Brooklyn; 347-844-9588*

Emmy Squared: *364 Grand Street, Brooklyn; 718-360-4535*



*Photo via Roberta's*

Roberta's

This restaurant pretty much defined what it meant to eat in Brooklyn from the moment it opened its doors. It's less the face of the borough today than it was back in 2008, but Roberta's is still making some of the best pizza in the borough and indeed, the city. With a wood-fired pizza oven shipped over from Italy, Roberta's style is Neapolitan and the toppings are both traditional and non-traditional, including guanciale, speck, Brussels sprouts and delicata squash.

The Roberta's pizzaiolos take every element of the pie extremely seriously. From temperature-controlled dough to cheese made in-house, it's all very specific.

Roberta's pizza can now be found all over the city, thanks to roving pizza ovens, as well as in Whole Foods freezer cases in Brooklyn and Manhattan. Those outside the city can order the pies via Goldbely.

**Must-order:** The off-menu Bee Sting, with sopressata, mozzarella, chile flakes and honey.

*261 Moore Street, Brooklyn; 718-417-1118*



*Photo by Liz Clayman*

#### Speedy Romeo

We can appreciate how wild it may seem for a pizzeria, best-known and loved for a pie covered in processed cheese, to make an "essential" list. But Speedy Romeo deserves its spot because it's doing something just different enough in a crowded field — and doing it very well. The high-quality pies here are cooked in a wood-fired oven and are mostly Neapolitan in style with one important exception: the Saint Louie pie, with Provel cheese, Italian sausage, pepperoni and pickled chile. The pie is at turns funky and salty, sour and meaty. It's cut into squares, which is affectionately known as the "party-style" cut in the Midwest.

Owner Justin Bazdarich hails from Kansas City, and makes the Saint Louis in homage to his father's hometown of St. Louis. The party-style cut and the Provel cheese, which is a mix of cheddar, Swiss and provolone, make this pie extremely unique in New York City.

Opened in 2012, Speedy recently expanded with a new location on the LES of Manhattan in early 2016.

**Must-order:** The Saint Louie, of course.

*376 Classon Avenue, Brooklyn; 718-230-0061*



*Garrett Ziegler/Flickr*

### Saraghina

There's nothing quite like a neighborhood pizzeria, and that's exactly what Saraghina is. Unlike a slice joint, Saraghina is a restaurant first, despite its brisk take-out business. It's warm and comfortable and the wood-fired oven is in view at the front of the house. When the restaurant opened in 2009, the Bed-Stuy pizzeria quickly became a neighborhood staple, a distinction it has retained.

The Neapolitan-style pizzas are chewy and puffy around the edges but it's the topping combinations that make Saraghina's pies truly shine. One combines two cheeses, mozzarella and sheep's milk ricotta, with whatever squash is in season, Tuscan kale, caramelized shallots and fried sage. Another matches prosciutto with sautéed cremini mushrooms and sweet basil: The yin and yang of flavor is a delight.

**Must-order:** Prosciutto and funghi pie

*435 Halsey Street, Brooklyn; 718-574-0010*



### Paulie Gee's

A funky-meets-serious vibe is what you'll find at this Greenpoint pizzeria inside a former warehouse. Now a chain, with locations in Miami, Chicago and more, Paulie Gee's was opened by Paul Giannone, who was inspired by the pizza at Roberta's. Also cranking out Neapolitan-style pies from a wood-fired oven, Paulie Gee's made a name for itself with a fun ambiance and cheekily-named pies with what can only be described as wacky toppings.

A few examples: Sake Mountain Way, with fresh mozzarella and tomato sauce made with garlic, onion, olive oil, basil, a sake reduction and heavy cream; The Grapeful Dead, with Gouda, spinach, house-pickled grape halves, olive oil and Parmigiano-Reggiano; and the Ricotta Be Kiddin' Me, with fresh mozzarella, Canadian bacon, sweet Italian sausage, basil and ricotta "dollops."

**Must-order:** The Grapeful Dead

60 Greenpoint Avenue, Brooklyn; 347-987-3747

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**PLACES MENTIONED**



**JULIANA'S**  
Pizza · DUMBO · \$\$

4.7	3.9	4.2
FOOD	DECOR	SERVICE



**DI FARA PIZZA**  
Pizza · Midwood · \$\$

4.6	2.5	3.0
FOOD	DECOR	SERVICE



**TOTONNO PIZZERIA**  
**NAPOLITANO**  
Pizza · Coney Island · \$\$

4.5	3.0	3.4
FOOD	DECOR	SERVICE



**L&B SPUMONI**  
**GARDENS**  
Italian · Gravesend · \$\$

4.4	3.2	3.7
FOOD	DECOR	SERVICE



**FRANNY'S**  
Pizza · Park Slope · \$\$

4.3	3.7	3.9
FOOD	DECOR	SERVICE



**ROBERTA'S**  
American · Bushwick · \$\$

4.6	3.8	3.9
FOOD	DECOR	SERVICE



**EMILY**  
Pizza · Clinton Hill · \$\$

4.7	3.7	4.2
FOOD	DECOR	SERVICE



**EMMY SQUARED**  
Pizza · Williamsburg · \$\$



**SARAGHINA**  
Italian · Bedford-Stuyvesant · \$\$

4.4	4.2	4.0
FOOD	DECOR	SERVICE



**LUCALI**  
Pizza · Carroll Gardens · \$\$

4.7	3.9	4.1
FOOD	DECOR	SERVICE



**SPEEDY ROMEO**  
Pizza · Clinton Hill · \$\$

4.5	4.1	4.0
FOOD	DECOR	SERVICE



**PAULIE GEE'S**  
Pizza · Greenpoint · \$\$

4.6	3.9	4.1
FOOD	DECOR	SERVICE



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