



# Pizzas

## *with a Pedigree*

The serrano ham pizza with pickled peppers at 360° Pizzeria in Camas, WA.

For decades, pizza was more or less the people's pie, its ingredients as predictable as they were satisfying: a thin crust, herbed tomato sauce, mozzarella, pepperoni slices, maybe a sprinkling of black olives. But the 1980s saw the rise of high-end "gourmet" pizzas, and some of these made their way to the national pizza chains, which relentlessly piled outlandish quantities of nontraditional ingredients atop a brick-thick crust and topped it all with industrial-grade cheese.

Today, the pizza pendulum is swinging back to its simple Neapolitan roots. Fashion-forward foodies are embracing a simple formula for buzz-worthy pizza: a skinny hand-tossed crust, fresh ingredients used with restraint, and a blistering few moments in a traditional brick oven, preferably wood-fired. But the minimalist approach is hardly universal. Reporters Alicia Comstock Arter in Seattle, Liz Crain in Portland, and Tim Pawsey in Vancouver, B.C. tell us where the hottest pies are.

## La Vita É Bella

2411 Second Avenue  
Seattle, WA, 206-441-5322  
www.lavitaebella.us  
Lunch Monday–Saturday  
Dinner daily

Belltown's colorful, modernist Italian spot puts out great pizza made by a native Sicilian, with a dazzling array of selections. The bufala pizza with imported buffalo mozzarella, fresh Roma tomatoes and basil on a thin, crispish crust is good for a simple supper. The Salame Piccante offers a more fiery bite, with owner Giuseppe Forte's homemade spicy salami (it's his grandfather's recipe), fresh mozzarella, and traditional tomato sauce. The cheerful trattoria's sidewalk seating is especially popular in the late spring and summer when the sun shines, or when the moon hits your eye like you know what (think *Moonstruck*).

## Pagliacci Pizza

Multiple Seattle-area locations  
Delivery 206-726-1717 in Seattle or  
425-453-1717 in Bellevue  
www.pagliacci.com  
Dinner nightly

When it comes to take-out, Seattle's homegrown Pagliacci Pizza is a favorite with hundreds of thousands of locals, from boomers to teens. Along with simple cheese pizzas and four-meats-and-a-mozzarella behemoth, they offer seasonal pizzas made with fresh local foods. Late May is slated (weather permitting) for Asparagus Primo pies with roasted Eastern Washington asparagus spears, onions, mushrooms and mozzarella on an olive oil sauce. A month later when the Walla Walla sweet onion crop comes in, those bulbs will find their way into a savory pie.

## Olympia Pizza

1500 Queen Anne Avenue North  
Seattle, WA  
206-285-5550  
www.olympiapizzaonqueenanne.com  
Lunch and dinner daily

Another reliable takeout source, Queen Anne Hill's Olympia Pizza and Spaghetti House delivers plump pies that will overfeed three people. The crust is homemade and the toppings are fresh and numerous. Typical of Greek-style pizza, according to owner Angelo Pappas, the



Nostrana Chef Cathy Whims.

cheese bubbles on the top, with hot meats and veggies underneath.

Hungry pizza savants lean to the House Special with pepperoni, Canadian bacon, salami, Italian sausage, mushrooms, black olives and green peppers. I'm still trying to work off my last piece, and it's been a month.

## PORTLAND AND ENVIRONS

### Apizza Scholls

4741 SE Hawthorne Boulevard  
Portland, OR, 503-233-1286  
www.apizzascholls.com  
Dinner Tuesday–Saturday

There are a lot of things you can't do at Apizza Scholls. You can't get pizza by the slice—the chef-owner doesn't like it. You can't make reservations, you can't make to-go orders, and you can't have more than three toppings per pie, including no more than one meat topping, because that would compromise the gravity-defying thin crust as well as the cooking time.

Chef-owner Brian Spangler's passion for pizza burns hot, and so does his oven, which often pushes a grand in Fahrenheit. This may be why Anthony Bourdain chose to visit Apizza Scholls recently for his popular Travel Channel show *No Reservations*; the episode aired in January.

Spangler takes all the recent attention in stride. "People have really just put their ears to the ground and picked up the chatter. We've had a lot of big-name press, including *New York Times* attention, and with that there's always a snowball affect."

With frequent dough shortages—all the dough is mixed by hand the day it's baked, and keeping up with the pizza-loving throngs is a challenge—Apizza often rewards hour-long waits with charred, chewy 18" East Coast neo-Neapolitan pies. Spangler and co-owner/wife Kim Nyland's seasoned baking expertise, matched with their "back East" pizza infatuation, have created a whole new batch of pizza fanatics in Portland.

## Nostrana

1401 SE Morrison Street  
Portland, OR, 503-234-2427  
www.nostrana.com  
Lunch Monday–Friday, Dinner daily

A few months after Apizza Scholls opened, Nostrana restaurant debuted its own casual yet carefully made Italian fare. Soon after, it was feted as restaurant of the year in 2006 by Portland's daily newspaper, *The Oregonian*.

Despite the fact that Nostrana serves everything from savory stews and roasts to a killer signature radicchio salad, the pizza gets a lot of attention from diners.

Part of the allure is that these 12" pies are crisply baked in a beautifully tiled, wood-fired oven from Italy—the epicenter of Nostrana's bustling exposed kitchen. But it's also because the pizzas, which diners slice themselves, are simple and traditional. Months before Nostrana opened its doors, chef-partner Cathy Whims took her time fine-tuning every aspect of her pizza's taste and texture, and the effort is rewarded in every bite, from the Margherita with buffalo mozzarella, tomato, and basil (arugula optional) to the Sofia with potatoes, rosemary, and housemade pancetta.

## Ken's Artisan Pizza

304 SE 28th Avenue  
Portland, OR, 503-517-9951  
www.kensartisan.com  
Dinner Tuesday–Saturday

The most recent member of new wave Portland pizza royalty is Ken's Artisan Pizza, which opened in the summer of 2006.

Its proprietor is Ken Forkish of Ken's Artisan Bakery, a French bakery in Northwest Portland that purveys bread to many of Portland's finest restaurants and frequently hosts visiting chefs ranging from Jacques Pépin to Alice Waters. After a couple years of commandeering his bakery for his standing-room-only Monday pizza nights, Forkish decided that a new, pizza-centric space was crucial, so he found one on 28th Avenue, inner East Portland's own restaurant row.

Now, Forkish's year-old-and-running pizzeria gives ample time and space to 12" thin-crust Italian pies. The enormous Provençal wood-fired oven that cranks out pizzas for hours on end most likely heats the dining room sufficiently on all but the coldest of Portland nights.

Ken's signature sauce, feistier than others, incorporates fennel and chili flakes. But tender palates can opt out for a simple sauce *sans* spice.



Feeling the heat at Ken's Artisan Pizza.

## Mississippi Pizza Pub

3552 North Mississippi Avenue  
Portland, OR, 503-288-3231  
www.mississippipizza.com  
Lunch, dinner daily

This late-night neighborhood hub with counter service and plenty of by-the-slice options offers live music nightly, as well as more eccentric entertainment such as adult spelling bees.

Here you have loads of toppings to choose from for make-your-own pizza, as well as fun pies like the popular Greek Geek with a garlic olive oil base or the meat-heavy Heartstopper.

"We lived in this area before there were any restaurants," says owner Philip Stanton. "And so when we bought this building our intention was to sell it to a restaurant. We soon found out no one wanted to lease it from us. I've never been involved with food so it took a few years of traveling, sampling and learning about pizza, but in 2000 we were confident enough to open shop."

Now, after several years of neighborhood growth, Stanton's confidence has been repaid with a bustling pizza parlor surrounded by dozens of restaurants and shops.

“Hot Lips is quintessential Portland pizza—local, seasonal, family-run.”

## Hot Lips Pizza

5440 NE 33rd Avenue  
Portland, OR, 503-445-1020

2211 SE Hawthorne Boulevard  
Portland, OR, 503-234-9999

1909 SW 6th Avenue  
Portland, OR, 503-224-0311

721 Northwest 9th Avenue  
Portland, OR, 503-595-2342

4825 Southwest 76th Avenue  
Portland, OR, 503-297-8424

www.hotlipspizza.com  
Lunch and dinner daily at all locations

This is quintessential Portland pizza—local, seasonal, family-run. Hot Lips owner David Yudkin, who joined the business in the mid-1980s and turned it toward environmental stewardship in the 1990s, is a visionary when it comes to sustainable community building. Want that pie delivered? Keep your eyes peeled for a small electric delivery vehicle stacked high with steaming pies.

Hot Lips' five locations serve ample pies made from ingredients sourced in large part from local farmers. All locations offer counter service with slice options as well as whole pies—and there's always a vegan option. The crust is more dough-y than flat, the toppings generous—the Juniper Grove Chèvre Special, with its olive oil base, roma or sun-dried tomatoes, mushrooms, and goat cheese, is a stand-out. In the last couple of years, Hot Lips has ventured into housemade seasonal sodas made with local berries and pure cane sugar. They are the perfect brew for a Portland pie. ▶