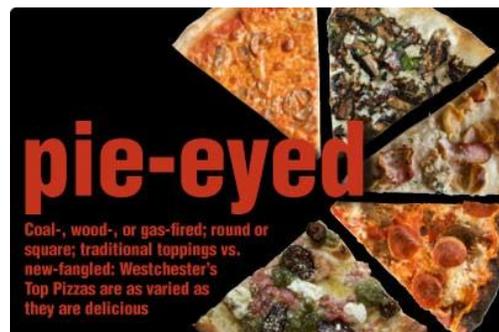


Westchester's Top Pizzas

Coal-, wood-, or gas-fired; round or square; traditional toppings vs. new-fangled: Westchester's top pizzas are as varied as they are delicious.

BY JULIA SEXTON; PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDRE BARANOWSKI



My romance with pizza started so early that it can't be linked to a single event, but I do know the pizza that stole my heart: it was a rectangular pie that my mother baked on an olive oil-slicked cookie sheet. The dough, made with Pillsbury all-purpose flour, had risen all day in our biggest, bathtub-sized ceramic bowl (we were a large family) and had already filled our house with a yeasty, nearly alcoholic scent. After two rises, and when the oven was so hot that being in the kitchen made her face rosy, my mother prodded and poked the dough into the corners of absolutely every pan that we owned—roasting pan, cookie sheets, cake pan, no matter. The oddly shaped, bumpy white pies were topped with crushed, imported tomatoes pulled straight out of the can and thin slices of cakey, aged Polly-O mozzarella cheese. Salt, pepper, oregano, and fluffy shreds of Pecorino Romano grated on a rotary mill followed, then olive oil around the naked lip before the whole thing was baked until volcanically bubbly. You can't believe how delicious it was. Since that time, I have eaten pizza wherever I have found myself, from Rome and the hills of Tuscany to, I'm afraid, even Costco. I've had pies in most of the famous New York and Connecticut parlors; I've painstakingly roasted my own pizzas over wood. I've even stood (more than once!) drunk on a Manhattan street corner eating a shame-laden 3 am triangle. On some very profound level, I've loved every one of those slices, down to the last orangey drop of grease. For me, pizza is a passion. It's a vice. It's a lifelong love affair.

I am not alone in my love of pizza; Westchester is filled with pizza fanatics. Within our borders, we support classic pizzerias that date from the pre-War origins of American pizza in working-class, Italian-immigrant communities. Westchester residents also flock to elegant new pizza restaurants, cheffed by food-world luminaries, that allude to Italy not with green-white-red pizza boxes, but with truffles from Alba and \$600 bottles of Barolo. High, low—Westchester loves them all. These are the pizzas that leave us pie-eyed.



The Amici pie

Frankie & Fanucci's Wood Oven Pizzeria

(202 E Hartsdale Ave, Hartsdale 914-725-8400; 301 Mamaroneck Ave, Mamaroneck 914-630-4360; fandfpizza.com)

This Hartsdale original has such a loyal fan base that it attempted the unthinkable: it set up shop on Mamaroneck Avenue, right across from hallowed Sal's. Insane? Perhaps. But in a testament to Westchester's love of pizza, it worked. Now both restaurants are packed with fans clamoring for their different pies. But whereas Sal's offers the classic American neighborhood pie baked in a gas-fueled deck oven, F & F is offering wood-fired rounds—which you can taste in every bite. We like the carnivorous overload of the Amici: sausage, pepperoni, meatballs, and mozzarella.