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PIE, OH, MY!

For the last 2½ years, Tiger Mullen has been buying or making pizza six nights a week. He has gained 25 pounds doing so, but it's all been in the name of research for his obsession—establishing a New Haven-style pizzeria.

It turns out that the Rockville resident and CPA, who was raised in Oakmont, Pa., has been a big fan of the legendary Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana in New Haven, Conn., since the age of 4, when his family would routinely stop there on the way to visit his grandparents. Mullen's grandfather tasted Frank Pepe's tomato pie the first week Pepe started selling it in June 1925, and became a longtime friend of the pizza master. So it's no wonder that Mullen—after interviewing 46 potential partners to help in his quest—selected Mark Bergami, a New Haven native who has managed pizzerias all over the Mid-Atlantic and New England, including Pepe's.

Together, they're opening **Haven Pizzeria Napoletana** in the former Hadji Oriental Rugs space next to Gaffney's Restaurant in Bethesda. The restaurant will seat 155, and feature two 100,000-pound brick ovens (structural steel footings were installed in the basement to help hold up the floor). Fired with anthracite coal that burns at 2200 degrees—enough to melt steel—the ovens will be constructed with cast-iron doors and grates. Mullen coaxed an 82-year-old brick pizza oven maker out of retirement to act as a consultant. To top the bar, he secured a slab of white marble that was part of the floor of Independence Hall about 100 years ago.

As for the menu, it's similar to the one at Pepe's, with a tomato pie, tomato pie with mozzarella, white pizza with spinach and mushrooms, white pizza with fresh clams and a fresh tomato pie. Mullen says that Haven's pizza will be made from a different recipe, with a unique yeast culture, dough-proofing method and water profile. The pies will cost \$8 to \$12 for a small, \$11 to \$22 for a medium and \$16 to \$26 for a large.

At press time, the partners were optimistically shooting for a late-June opening.

Haven Pizzeria Napoletana, 7137 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda, 301-664-6433, www.havenpizzeria.com



Tiger Mullen, left, and partner Mark Bergami are opening a new pizza place.



Terasol brings a bit of Paris to the neighborhood, and features local crafts up front.

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

My reviews of 25 new restaurants in the May/June dining issue covered the notable spots, but weren't meant to be exhaustive. However, a reader e-mailed us about one omitted restaurant worth checking out, and she was right.

Terasol, which opened last November in Upper Northwest D.C., is a charming French café across the street from Politics & Prose bookstore. It's easy to miss, which makes it all the more surprising to walk in on a Saturday night and find such a lively scene: local artisans' crafts at the front of the restaurant, and a trumpet player and guitarist playing jazz in the back. In between are café tables and chairs and conversation-piece glass light fixtures on the walls, and overhead, a 1920s pressed tin ceiling unearthed when husband-and-wife owners Alan Moin and Sabrina Ousmaal renovated the former yoga studio.

The menu is simple, with soups, salads, quiches and a few entrées at reasonable prices (everything is less than \$20). The food is pretty and carefully prepared, whether it's a crisply dressed frisée salad accessorized with sundried tomato strips, capers and diced bacon; a terrific grilled shrimp with tomato, olives and rice; or a moist roast chicken with an elegant drizzle of pesto.

Moin, who has been in the local restaurant business for more than 18 years, and Ousmaal, a potter whose day job is publisher of an energy newsletter, live in Chevy Chase, D.C., and thought that the neighborhood needed a nice Parisian-style café. Now it has one.

Terasol, 5010 Connecticut Ave. NW, 202-237-5555, www.terasolartisans.com

KATIE LEDECKY
INTERVIEW

GREEN AWARD
WINNERS

PHILANTHROPISTS
OF THE YEAR

QUENCH
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ISSUE

Whatever Happened to...?

scinating People, Places & Things

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To mark
Bethesda
Magazine's
50th issue,
our editors
chose these

fascinating
people,
PLACES
& things*

*in no particular order

1 Visitors gazing up at the Washington Monument may not know it, but they partly have billionaire philanthropist and Bethesda resident **David Rubenstein** to thank for the view. Early in 2012, the 62-year-old co-founder of The Carlyle Group, a hugely successful global asset management firm, donated \$7.5 million to help fix cracks in the iconic structure that were caused by an earthquake in August 2011. That gift was just the latest of Rubenstein's donations dedicated to national and historic treasures. In 2007, he paid \$21.3 million for a copy of the Magna Carta that is now on permanent loan to the National Archives. In 2008 and 2009, respectively, he bought copies of the Emancipation Proclamation and the Declaration of Independence, both of which are now displayed in federal buildings. And in 2011, he donated \$13.5 million for a new gallery at the National Archives and \$4.5 million for the National Zoo's giant panda reproduction program. But that's not all.



Rubenstein is reported to be the single largest donor in the history of The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. And he's apparently not done. Rubenstein, whose bank accounts swelled again when his company went public in May, recently told *The Washington Post* that he's committed to giving away lots of his wealth. (JULIE RASICOT)



2 **Tiger Mullen** is obsessed with pizza—and that's putting it mildly. The Rockville accountant and owner of Bethesda's Haven Pizzeria Napoletana likes to immerse himself in his passions. How else to explain that he bought and/or made pizza six nights a week for 2½ years (gaining 25 pounds in the process), set his home oven on the cleaning cycle to replicate the higher temperatures of commercial pizza ovens (almost burning down his house), looked at 50 possible pizzeria locations in the Washington area, interviewed nearly 65 pizza chefs before making a hiring decision, coaxed an 82-year-old brick pizza-oven maker out of retirement to help build the ovens, spent \$400,000 on two 100,000-pound brick ovens...the list goes on. But Mullen has more than a taste for pizza. He also has a head for business: Haven was profitable in February 2012, the first month it was open. (CAROLE SUGARMAN)



3 A member of the committee that interviewed **DeRionne Pollard** during Montgomery College's nationwide search for a president may have said it best: This dynamic, down-to-earth leader has a "wow personality." After being chosen in 2010 to take the reins of the state's largest two-year college, Pollard didn't waste any time "wowing" the community, immediately laying out plans to increase the number of students who complete degrees and to define the college's core values and mission statements. Pollard, who came from Las Positas College in Livermore, Calif., is the first black woman to serve as president of Montgomery College, and its first openly gay leader. She lives in Clarksburg with her partner, Robyn Jones, and their son, Myles Julian Pollard-Jones. If Pollard has her way, however, she won't be remembered for her ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. She'll go down in local history for making the college "the most relevant community college in the country," as she frequently notes in her speeches. (AMY REININK)

THE RESTAURANT ISSUE

Bethesda

MAY/JUNE 2012 \$3.95

NEW CHEF IN TOWN

Celebrity chef
Bryan Voltaggio
brings star power to
Friendship Heights

BEST NEW Pizza Places GUIDE TO Food Trucks

BethesdaMagazine.com



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Upper crusts

**With several new
pizza restaurants
around, our food
critic goes in
search of the
perfect
pie**

The Oven-Dried
Tomato and Fresh
Buffalo Mozzarella
pie at Matchbox
Vintage Pizza
Bistro has a smoky,
crackly crust made
in the New York
style.

By Carole Sugarman

Photos by Stacy Zarin-Goldberg

Everybody loves pizza,

so little wonder that Bethesda and the surrounding towns have always had lots of pizza chains and carryout joints. Within the last couple of years, though, several swankier places have joined their ranks.

Just as the hamburger has been elevated in recent years (think BGR The Burger Joint), "the same thing is happening with pizza," says Spiro Gioldasis, owner of Pacci's Neapolitan Pizzeria in Silver Spring.

Cooked in oak- or coal-fired ovens, these artisan pies—their handmade crusts blistered with leopard-like spots and topped with high-quality mozzarella and zesty sauce—bear little resemblance to their mass-produced counterparts.

So which are the real winners among this mushrooming pie population? I decided to find out.

I limited my sampling to places that have opened within the last two years, compared the pizzas by style, and ate a Margherita plus one of the most popular specialty pies at each establishment.

Some overall impressions: We definitely have better pizza options, though not all of them are great. Pizza is made with few ingredients, but there are myriad variations in the dough, cheese and sauce—any of which can make a difference, as can the heat source and cooking time. And since this is a handcrafted product, pizzas can vary from day to day within the same restaurant, depending on who's making them.

Defining pizza styles is tricky; it depends whom you ask. Similarly, everybody has opinions about what makes a pleasing pie.

Here are mine.

Haven Pizzeria
Napoletana's Mark
Bergami makes
his pizza New
Haven style—with
a relatively thin,
coal-fired crust.



upper crusts

the best:

NEW HAVEN:

Haven Pizzeria Napoletana

NEAPOLITAN:

Pacci's

NEW YORK:

Matchbox

MARGHERITA (or similar):

Matchbox

SPECIALTY PIZZA:

Haven Pizzeria Napoletana's
White Clam Pie

OVERALL:

Matchbox


The Margherita Pizza at Pacci's Neapolitan Pizzeria features fresh, creamy rounds of mozzarella.

In search of the perfect pie...

NEW HAVEN STYLE

Inspired by Old World New York pizzas, this style was popularized by two New Haven institutions, Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana, opened in 1925, and Sally's Apizza, opened by Pepe's nephew in 1938. Both serve irregular-shaped, coal-fired pizzas that have been altered by others through the years. The common thread is that the crusts are relatively thin, crunchy on the outside and chewy in the middle. Clam pizza is a New Haven signature.

Haven Pizzeria Napoletana

 **The people:** Rockville resident Tiger Mullen has fond childhood memories of stopping at Frank Pepe Pizzeria Napoletana on the way to visit his grandparents in New Haven. As an adult, he became obsessed with opening a pizzeria of his own. He partnered with Mark Bergami, a New Haven native who managed a number of pizzerias, including Pepe's. After months of delay, their place opened in February.

The particulars: Two 100,000-pound brick ovens with 18-inch-thick walls fire the pizzas using anthracite coal that burns at about 2,000 degrees. The sauce is made from canned tomatoes that are less sweet than the San Marzanos used in Neapolitan pizzas, and the whole milk mozzarella comes from the family-owned Calabro Cheese Corp. in East Haven, Conn.

The pizza: Haven Fresh (\$11.50 for 10-inch; \$22 for 16-inch): Topped with mozzarella, grated pecorino Romano, fresh tomatoes, olive oil and basil, the Haven Fresh is the closest thing to a Margherita. I had this pizza twice: Once, the crust was crisp on the outside with a somewhat airy interior; another time, it was thinner and cracker-like. I preferred the airier version, but both provided terrific bases for the full-flavored cheeses. However, the out-of-season tomatoes were pretty tasteless.

Haven White Clam Pie (\$15 for 10-inch; \$30 for 16-inch): With freshly shucked top neck clams, grated pecorino Romano and lots of garlic and oregano atop a blistered crust, this distinctive and pungent pie will have you making a return visit. Just remember to bring a breath mint. Or better yet, order one of the OMG gelatos for dessert.

The place: A handsome spot, with large, brown leather booths and some history: a wood floor reclaimed from an old Maker's Mark whiskey house in Kentucky; and a white marble bar that was part of the floor at Philadelphia's Independence Hall about 100 years ago.

7137 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda, 301-664-9412, www.havenpizzeria.com

Pete's New Haven Style Apizza

 **The people:** A group of family and friends own three area Pete's pizza places, including a twin brother and sister who—not surprisingly—hail from New Haven. The Friendship Heights location opened in June 2010.

The particulars: Pete's pies are cooked in gas deck ovens, as co-owner Joel Mehr doesn't believe that coal cooking is a prerequisite for the New Haven style. Pete's uses all-purpose flour for its crust, Grande whole milk mozzarella from Wisconsin, and Stanislaus canned tomatoes from California for its sauce.

The pizza: Margherita (\$20 for 14-inch; \$25.95 for 18-inch): My previous pies at Pete's have been quite good, with a terrific crunchy-on-the-outside, chewy-in-the-middle crust and toppings added in a thoughtful ratio. But on this visit, the Margherita's crust was thin, flat and crisp with a monsoon of mozzarella that made it top-heavy.

New Haven (\$20 for 14-inch; \$25.95 for 18-inch): The crust was a problem (see Margherita above),

and the whole thing was so greasy that my fingers left splotches on my notepad. I liked the garlicky kick, but the chopped Chesapeake clam population was sparse.

The place: Not much going for it in the way of atmosphere and service. You order at the counter, get a number, sit down at a table (if one is available) and wait for your food to be delivered. If you want another drink, dessert or a carryout box, you have to shimmy your way between the tables and get it yourself. My friend calls it "takeout food with tables."

4940 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington, D.C., 202-237-7383, www.petesapizza.com

NEAPOLITAN

With thin, foldable crusts and soft centers, Neapolitan pizzas are cooked in wood-burning, dome-shaped brick ovens at high heat (about 900 degrees) for a short period of time (no longer than 90 seconds). True Neapolitans are made with soft, finely milled flour, cow or buffalo mozzarella and San Marzano tomatoes, a variety of plum tomato grown outside Naples, Italy.

Pacci's Neapolitan Pizzeria

 **The people:** Owner Spiro Gioldasis is a busy guy. He also owns Pacci's Trattoria & Pasticceria and the new Stage Burger Lounge, and manages Mrs. K's Tollhouse, all in Silver Spring. Rosario Granieri, formerly of Oro Pomodoro in Rockville, originally fired up Pacci's brick oven. But the pizzaiolo, as pizza-makers are called, left in November, and three different pizza-makers are now on the job.

The particulars: Sometime after opening Pacci's in late April 2010, Gioldasis was going to have his pizzas certified as authentic Neapolitan by a trade association. Unhappy with the process, he withdrew. Still, he says Pacci's pizzas have all the requisite ingredients.

Key to the ratings:

 = OK
 = Good
 = Very Good
 = Excellent

The pizza: Margherita (\$11 for 12-inch): Gioldasis recently tweaked the dough recipe, adding less water, among other things. The smoky, nicely blistered crust seemed firmer and less soupy than on previous visits, but was still easy to fold. Topped with lightly melted rounds of fresh, creamy mozzarella, this is a good pie, albeit not a great one.

La Diavola (\$13 for 12-inch): The high-quality, spicy salami has the perfect kick, but the short cooking time didn't give it time to crisp. Flaccid pork products don't do much for me, particularly when the rendered fat pools on the pie.

The place: A wood-fired pizza oven in the front introduces the long, skinny space, and wines attractively stacked on shelves behind the bar give Pacci's a cool and sophisticated vibe. The ambience somehow makes the pizza taste better.

8113 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring, 301-588-1011, www.paccispizzeria.com

Pizza CS

 **The people:** Friends Ankur Rajpara and Jonathan Allen opened the place in November, across the street from the popular Matchbox (starting "the David and Goliath of pizza wars," Allen jokes). Rajpara studied Neapolitan pizza-making for two years and is the pizzaiolo; Allen, who worked his way up in the restaurant business over 15 years, is the chef de cuisine.

The particulars: They make their pies in an oak-burning brick oven,

Table Talk

Feb 9, 2012 01:09 PM

Sneak Peek: Haven Pizzeria Napoletana

BY CAROLE SUGARMAN



A tomato pie fresh from the oven at Haven Pizzeria
Photo by Emma Patti

I've already written a lot about the décor and design at Haven Pizzeria Napoletana, the New Haven-style pizzeria in Bethesda that's finally opening on Wednesday, February 15. The 14-foot paddles to retrieve pies from the massive 2000-degree coal-fired ovens. The floor made from reclaimed wood from an old Maker's Mark whiskey barrel aging house in Kentucky. The white marble bar that was part of the floor of Philadelphia's Independence Hall about 100 years ago, and so on.

But this sneak peek—which includes photos of those details—also includes a sneak eat. And if my initial tastes of two pizzas and some gelato are indicative of what's to come, I think Bethesda area residents are in for a real treat.

Too many pizzas in town have one fault or another (flabby crust, unremarkable sauce, rubbery cheese, excessive oil, weird ratios of ingredients), but my first impression is that the components of these pies really click. Look forward to thin, crisp crusts with a slightly charred edge and smoky aftertaste; bright, not-too-sweet tomato sauce and high-quality toppings like freshly shucked top neck clams.

As for the incredibly creamy and intensely-flavored gelato, all I can say is wow.

Haven Pizzeria Napoletana, 7137 Wisconsin Ave. Bethesda, 301-664-9412. www.havenpizzeria.com

Upper Crusts

With several new pizza restaurants around, our food critic goes in search of the perfect pie

BY CAROLE SUGARMAN



HAVEN PIZZERIA NAPOLETANA'S MARK BERGAMI MAKES HIS PIZZA NEW HAVEN

The Best:

(page 3 of 3)

New Haven: Haven Pizzeria
Napoletana

Neapolitan: Pacci's

New York: Matchbox

Margherita (or similar): Matchbox

Specialty pizza: Haven Pizzeria Napoletana's
White Clam Pie

Overall: Matchbox

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FOOD AND RESTAURANTS

Best Pizza (Readers' Pick) Haven Pizzeria Napoletana

The Neapolitan-meets-New Haven-style pizzas here are almost too good-looking to eat. Almost. Still steaming and lightly pocked with char spots, they arrive at the table in charming, aluminum lunch trays. There are plenty of classics—the margherita (\$9-\$17) and bianco (\$8-\$15) are both superlative—but the signature selections definitely merit a try. The Uovo Carne (\$12) boasts sausage, bacon, veggies and four sunny-side-up eggs, while the white Pie Bergami (\$14-\$25) mixes mozzarella, pecorino and goat cheese with chicken chunks and salami.

"It's not about putting ingredients on a pizza and calling it a specialty," says Mike Dolinger, vice president of operations. "The flavors have to truly meld."

If you're too full after the meal for dessert, you can get a quart of the house-made organic gelato packed up. Creamy pistachio is always an excellent choice.

7137 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda, [301-664-9412](tel:301-664-9412), havenpizzeria.com

Other Top Vote Getters: Mia's Pizzas, Ledo's, Mamma Lucia, Matchbox, Potomac Pizza, Pete's New Haven Style Apizza, Pizzeria da Marco



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