



IT'S ALL IN THE CRUST

DOWNTOWN PIZZA CO. IS A BIG HIT

BY: MICHAL TELLOS

Unlike so many downtown businesses, Downtown Pizza Co. was hardly a first try or passion project. Owner Mark Boscariol, local ribbon-cutter and entrepreneur, has been all over the food map in Windsor for years, currently holding the keys for popular spots such as The Willistead and Snackbar-B-Q as well. And so it should come as little surprise that he knows what he's doing.

Downtown Pizza Co. is located where Chanos's once was, before being forced to close, but the interior is renovated with a much more retro, diner-style feel, and as the name suggests, you're unlikely to be building your own stir-fry. The place instead specializes in personal-sized pizzas, done more or less in a Windsor-style thickness, in a wood-burning oven.

The offerings range from twists on classics, such as their Asian-inspired ode to Hawaiian via the Full Moon Party, to downright novel pies such as Walk in the Woods, which features honeyed mushrooms and a cream-based sauce, somewhat blandly dubbed 'white sauce.' Anyone else thinking of the now-defunct McCain's frozen Parisian pizza? I kid, of course, but those two Downtown creations are my favourite pizzas on the menu.

The pizza offerings are split evenly between white sauce bases, and the traditional tomato, and, perhaps as a tribute to the former tenant, you do have the option to build your own, though oddly you can only build with a tomato sauce base.

Other than the unique toppings, there's one feature that distinguishes the pizza here from all others, and that's the sesame seed crust, which a quick, non-scientific poll reveals, is polarizing. Personally, I love it. I think it gives a unique texture and additional crunch to a medium-thin crust, and becomes something of a signature for the place, even if two-

thirds of it ends up on your plate or the floor. But as much as I love shrooms and sesame, the pizza here isn't even my favourite part. When you look at the menu, the sandwiches almost seem like secondary choices to the pizza, but they're really not. The Cuban In Rome is my favourite sandwich not made at Bread Meats Bread and my absolute favourite item on the menu. You probably guessed that it's an Italian riff on a classic Cuban sandwich, and the idea works so well. I'm a sucker for a Cuban sandwich and the bread they use here sets it off. It's not quite a panini, but a thin, warm bun.

If you're not hungry, go for the drinks. They have the usual and trendy array of support-local beers, all of which are great, although the in-house brew needs some tweaking. But the true gems are the cocktail offerings, which are effervescent, colourful, and above all else, sneakily jam-packed with booze. Take the Jungle Bird for example. It's composed of dark rum, Campari, and pineapple juice. The latter two ingredients balance each other out in bitterness and sweetness, also working together to mask the fact that there are about two ounces of hard liquor in there with them. My wife and I had two each in a short span and we both subsequently slept through most our late night WIFF feature.

The cocktail menu also makes a respectable stab at beer cocktails, a not uncommon idea in cities that aren't Windsor. The results are mixed – get it? I do prefer the regular cocktail menu, but I love the thought and ambition of including these as a subcategory on the menu.

More than anything, Downtown Pizza Co. is a perfect marriage of styles. The food, drinks, bright menus, and industrial design all work perfectly together to create a unified experience. Each time I have been, the music has been loud and the place has been rocking. It's my favourite Boscariol project yet.

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Factory House

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If you're reading this paper, chances are you're already one of the good people who would choose to support a local, independent business over an all-pervasive, big chain restaurant. What I like about Factory House, one of Windsor's newest restaurants, is that choosing local doesn't have to mean limited menus with high prices or traveling off the beaten path. Father and daughter owners Bill Kobrosli and Mona Elkadri are successfully giving Windsor what it wants without ignoring what it actually needs.

In a blue collar town, convenience, selection and good service can often be what makes or breaks a new restaurant. The extensively renovated, Factory House (complete with ample parking) has the features that make a chain seem attractive with a big bonus. Even with an elaborate menu that ranges from fusion style BBQ Chicken Tacos and Korean Curry Beef

Stews to hearty poutines and homemade pierogis, they manage to support as many local companies as possible while making everything from scratch (even the bread!)

After moving back from Vancouver, owner Bill decided that the "hard working people of Windsor deserved to be rewarded with the best of everything." They spared no expense with the renovations and it's clear just how much work has gone into their vision and concept too. Consistency is key and it's clear that community manager Mona (and fellow blogger over at ohsmona.com) has an eye for quality and style. Mona, Bill, and manager Sarah, carefully curated the interior with Ontario-made furniture and a selection of murals done by Windsor Artists – making for the perfect setting to wash down some thanksgiving dinner soup with an ice cold glass of micro-brewed beer.