

TAMPA TRIBUNE

and The Tampa Times

[DINING]

DINING REVIEW

Best New York Pizza

BOTTOM LINE: Consistently good, price-friendly neighborhood pizza shop

WHERE: 14741 N. Dale Mabry Highway Tampa

HOURS: 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday

CREDIT CARDS: DISC/MC/V

RESERVATIONS: No

CHILDREN'S MENU: No, unless you count pizza (we do)

ALCOHOL: Beer, wine and sangria

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS: Yes

PRICE: Entrees range from \$2.09 (pizza slice) to \$23.99 (large Sicilian pizza with the works)

CALL: (813) 963-7600

A white sauce pizza with ricotta cheese, spinach and tomatoes beckons comfort-food appetites at Best New York Pizza in Carrollwood.



Staff photo by JAY NOLAN

Tampa's own slice of the Big Apple

By MARY PATRICK
Tribune correspondent

TAMPA • In recent years, pizza has been reclaimed from the chains that dominated it for decades. There are now gourmet pizzas, coal-fired pizzas, wood-fired pizzas and more, all served in mom-and-pop shops that give their pies the personal touch. For the pizza lover, this is something of a golden age.

Best New York Pizza isn't part of the gourmet trend, however. It's a throwback for those who grew up in the Empire State or anywhere that supported a small, independently owned New York-style pizza joint. They focus on just a few things and do them all well: pizza, subs, calzones and several Italian dinners.

The goal here isn't to thrill you with nuanced culinary ex-

perimentation. This is heavy comfort food, served by a friendly and efficient wait staff. No wonder the place was packed every time we visited, particularly on weekends.

Best New York Pizza is in the corner of the L-shaped shopping plaza on North Dale Mabry Highway, the same one that houses Office Depot and Sweet Tomatoes. It's difficult to miss; a statue of a chef painted yellow with a green apron stands near the entrance.

Inside is a small, colorful dining area with a dozen or so tables and a counter facing the front door. Several flat-screen televisions hang from the wall to the right (all tuned to sports), and pictures of food adorn the wall to the left. Both dine-in and take-out orders are made at the counter.

We first tried the pizza by which all pizza places should be judged: the basic cheese. This allows the best chance to taste the most important ingredient in any pizza, the dough. It also happens to be the pizza our child likes best (There is no children's menu at Best New York Pizza, but isn't any pizza menu a children's menu?).

You can buy the pizza by the slice or the whole pie. Service was prompt and very friendly. The pizza was delivered to our booth on an elevated tray, already sliced, with a pie server. We were happy to see the pizza passed the first test — the crust was thin and the slices could be folded over to make a "pizza sandwich." The dough came cooked perfectly: lightly browned with just a slight crunch and a fresh, slightly

sweet taste. The sauce was harder to figure. At times it tasted fresh made, while some at our table thought it tasted store bought. Either way, it was just fine.

On a subsequent visit, we tried the Sicilian-style cheese pizza. Best New York Pizza delivers its best pie in this style (although that's largely a matter of taste, depending on how you like your crust). The Sicilian crust was perfect: browned on the bottom and crisp to the bite, but warm and fluffy on the inside. It's a simple pie, but a satisfying one.

Of the sandwiches we tried, the knockout was the Philly Cheese Steak. The sandwich came served on fresh bread heaped with thinly sliced beef mixed with sautéed onions, green peppers and melted pro-

volone.

The Meatball Parmesan Sub came with meatballs somewhat less spicy than we desired, but — as with all of the sandwiches — the bread was fresh and the portion generous.

From the appetizer menu, we tried the garlic knots, which provided strong flavor without being overpowering. It's not really needed, but for an extra 59 cents you can get marinara sauce. For dessert, the super-rich, homemade cannoli is highly recommended.

A final, important note: Everything about Best New York was consistent on every visit, from the friendly service to the food. That's a rare quality.

Tribune reviewers eat anonymously. Mary Patrick can be reached at marypatrick@fridayextra.com.