

Wood fired pizza at Stanziato's in Danbury



Photo: Jane Stern / For Hearst Connecticut Media

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Sausage pizza at Stanziato's in Danbury.

It has come to the point where I almost do not want to take my out-of-town friends to eat pizza. Many of my friends are foodies, some not, but unfortunately both sides have the same reply when the pizza hits the table: “It’s burnt!,” they exclaim.

Allow me to get on my soapbox for a minute. (It is a low-slung soapbox, so this will not take long.) Connecticut has the best pizza in America, maybe the world. On a trip to Rome I was taken to one of the most celebrated pizza places, and my thoughts were, “It’s OK.”

Of course, Connecticut has its superstars: Pepe’s, Sally’s, Modern, Roseland, Carminuccio’s and more, but we also have lesser-known places that produce a great pie; among them is Stanziato’s in Danbury.

Stanziato’s serves very good pizza, but that is not the singular reason I love this place. They are frontline warriors in the “NO, IT ISN’T BURNT” war. When you enter the restaurant, you will see a treatise for you

to read that explains the pizza served here is cooked in a blast furnace of a wood oven for a relatively short time. Because of this intensity, the fire causes the dough to bubble and char. Instead of one uniform taupe crust, it is irregular, multi-hued and multitextured. That is exactly why those of us who love Connecticut pizza find it extraordinary.

Stanziato's serves an array of 12-inch pizzas. On the menu they are divided into red (tomato) pies and white (olive oil) pies. Many of the pies are creative, but you will not go wrong with the simple ones like the tomato sauced margherita with nothing on it but mozzarella, Parmigiano, basil leaves and oil. The Shroomz is loaded with cremini mushrooms, caramelized onions and mozzarella. This is one of my favorites.

The white pies are more exotic. There are duck meat ones, truffle ones, sopressata and shrimp ones. My teeth and I find the white clam pie a little scary, as the clams are placed on top of the pie still in their shells. If you eat with care it should not be a problem.

I have always focused on the pizza, but I have to say the menu is much more vast than this. The dishes are original and very well done. In fact, some of them are so elevated that it is hard to imagine you are eating in a pizzeria. An example (and a spectacular one at that) is Wood Fired Bone Marrow. The marrow bones are cooked in the red-hot pizza oven, and come with slices of toast that you spoon the savory drippings on.



Photo: Stanziato's

Wood fired bone marrow from Stanziato's in Danbury.

Connecticut is already the go-to state for pizza, and the new pies just keep on coming. Here are 10 newcomers to the pizza scene. [More here.](#)

Media: Hartford Curant

The salads are quite remarkable. All manner of healthy greens are elegantly composed and dressed. One can add steak, chicken or shrimp to the salads to make them heartier. Make sure you try the buttermilk dressing, as well, which must have come from the deep South, where it is adored.

Two of my favorite items on the menu are the Burrata and Fig Jam appetizer. Burrata is a slice of mozzarella whose insides are a creamy custard. Spread on the seasoned toast it is served with, you have ordered a “died-and-gone-to-heaven” moment. There is also an original dish I like very much composed of butternut squash and parsnips with blue cheese and candied walnuts. At every turn of the menu there is a surprise. All ingredients are sourced from small farms or imported from Italy. There are no corners cut and yet the bill remains modest for the quality.



Photo: Jane Stern / For Hearst Connecticut Media

The burrata plate at Stanziato's in Danbury.

My favorite surprise item is the cream puffs for dessert. Cream puffs? In a pizza place? Yes and yes. First of all, no one serves cream puffs anymore. The last time I saw them on a menu was back in the 1960s at a tearoom where little old ladies dined. I could not resist this odd retro offering. You get two cream puffs to an order and you choose from Nutella or vanilla. (I like the vanilla best.) Be prepared for a blast from the past. I think it should be mandatory that all restaurants serve cream puffs. Please bring them back.



Photo: Jane Stern / For Hearst Connecticut Media

Stanziato's in Danbury offers cream puffs, a rare dessert option.

More Information

Stanziato's

Wood Fired Pizza

35 Lake Ave. Ext., Danbury; 203-885-1057, stanziatos.com

Stanziato's is on a less-than-scenic stretch of Lake Avenue Extension. The restaurant shares a parking lot with a few forgettable-looking places. This is not calendar-pretty Connecticut, where autumn leaves swirl and white-steepled churches dot the valleys. But there is a real reason to go here because the food is great, the service friendly, the small bar convivial and the atmosphere casual, yet lively. My only warning is that when the place is full (and it is very popular), the noise level can be high. Maybe this is on purpose so people do not get in arguments about whether the crust is burnt or not. Now that would make sense.

Jane Stern, a Ridgefield resident, coauthored the popular "Roadfood" guidebook series with Michael Stern. Join her each week as she travels Fairfield County finding a great meal in unexpected places for \$20 or less.