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Restaurant Review: Harvest Pizzeria

Thursday, July 28, 2011 08:00 AM

By G.A. Benton • Photos by Jodi Miller



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On an opening-day visit, I was so blown away by the great pizzas and general sophistication of Harvest Pizzeria I couldn't believe it'd only been in business for a few hours. Ergo I went back the very next day to confirm what I ate was in fact that sensational. Well, it was, and frankly it's a damn good bet I'm perched on a seat there right now, buzzsawing through marvelous Harvest munchies while you're reading this.

Man, the German Village pizza scene has gone from famine to feast at, like, warp speed.

So what was formerly an area of town blessed with a wealth of terrific restaurants but cursed with a dearth of pizzerias is now home to the very best place to eat pizzas in Columbus. That's because not only does Harvest crank out phenomenal 'zas, but from top to bottom, from its cute, Euro-ish patio to its tastefully understated and hip, open-kitchen-equipped dining room, Harvest exhibits extraordinary smarts and style.

First of all, the building looks like an - and I never use this adjective - adorable brick cottage. Secondly, the non-pizza portion of the menu includes an engaging and non-cliche wine list; cocktails made with top-notch liquids; and excellently sourced, handmade appetizers and desserts.

Harvest Pizzeria

495 S. 4th St., German Village

614-824-1769

harvestpizzeria.com

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As a small plate, the Wild-Caught Galician Sardines (\$8, but not on the menu the last time I went) ate like an elegant little salad. I loved its hefty hunks of white-fleshed and salmon-like fish, fresh and liquorice-y fennel fronds, tender lettuces and tongue-tinglingly citric dressing.

But I had plenty more love to give when it came to the housemade Warm Ricotta (\$8). Drizzled with balsamic vinegar plus lavender honey and brightened by lemon zest, this impressive, fresh-cheesy curd-fest tasted like the kind of Italian-style cheesecake you might eat in a real and real fancy Italian restaurant.

While far from bad, the House Chopped Salad (\$9) suffered by comparison. Similarly, this colorful, crunchy and fun-to-munch ensemble had elements - salty and evanescent shaved ricotta salata curls and killer tomatoes from an owner's Canal Winchester farm - that outclassed others (canned olives and chickpeas and iceberg lettuce).

OK, those game-changing pizzas. I've eaten dozens of pizzas in Italy, where crust is king, and these Harvest pies are excitingly close to the real thing. They're thin and delicate in the center but sexily puffy, charred and wood-smoke scented on their perfectly chewy edges. Yet whereas crusts and the (crushed-tomato-like) house sauce are classically Italian, toppings are up-to-the-minute chic American. Here's a few highly recommended pies I tried.

- **Ohio Bacon** (\$14) Slightly sweet and salty, this beauty contained: Canadian-style bacon made with Ohio swine, milky fresh mozzarella, roasted red peppers and a garnish of super-fresh marjoram.
- **Goat Cheese** (\$15) Thinly sliced sopressata (lusty salami), Ohio goat cheese, caramelized onions and lots of jammy oven-blistered tomatoes make this pizza soar.
- **Yuma** (\$13) This zesty, Southwestern model's designed for spice lovers because its smoky chipotle-accented sauce strikes fire with jalapenos and clumps of chorizo; corn, havarti cheese and roasted red peppers tame the flames a bit.
- **Fennel Sausage** (\$15) Rich, sharp and bold with local gouda, smoked provolone, excellent sausage, onion and fennel pollen

Homemade desserts can wow too, such as the surprisingly fancy Butterscotch Budino (\$6). Kinda like a dense pudding parfait with a lovely - and barely sweet - scorched sugar character, it has tart creme fraiche plus toasted hazelnuts and vanilla-scented Maldon sea salt for extra depth and texture.

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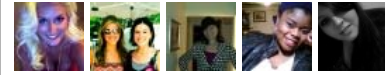
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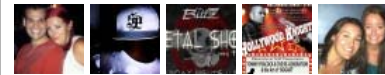
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