



**PIECE** THE 25 BEST PIZZAS  
**OFFERINGS** IN CHICAGO

BY JEFF RUBY

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANNA KNOTT



**25 BEST PIZZAS**



(Clockwise from lower left) Santullo's cheese, Castel Gandolfo's Margherita, Crust's flammkuchen, and Nella's Margherita

## 11 UNION PIZZERIA LAMB SAUSAGE, EGGPLANT, KALAMATA OLIVES

**THIN** Remember when the college-town pizzeria was a dank off-campus basement with greasy, cardboard scraps and pitchers of watery beer? Now the kids have shiny places like Union, where a professionally trained chef makes organic wood-fired pizzas and skilled bartenders pull perfect pints of French Trappist ales. Vince DiBattista's best pizza channels a classic Mediterranean combo of tender lamb sausage, smooth eggplant chunks, and meaty Kalamatas, which meld perfectly on the bubbly, charred crust. "When I put it on the menu, I joked that this would be our foodie pizza," says DiBattista. "Of course, some college kids order it, too."

1245 CHICAGO AVE. EVANSTON: 847-475-2400

## 12 MACELLO BIANCA

**THIN** Poor Puglia. The heel of the Italian boot has a long history of being stepped on. The

Goths conquered the region; so did the Normans, Byzantines, Turks, Venetians, and Romans (twice). So you can understand why Giovanni Denigris, the Puglia-born owner of Macello, is quick to differentiate his Pugliese wood-fired pizzas from their more celebrated compatriots. "Our pizza is much thinner and crispier than others," he says. "Neapolitan is more chewy." Macello's energetic Bianca looks like a glossy arugula and cherry tomato salad topped with splodges of creamy mozzarella and a pinch of salt atop a delicate cracker that's somehow supple and golden brown. *Grazie*, Puglia.

1235 W. LAKE ST. 312-850-9870

## 13 PIZANO'S THIN WITH SAUSAGE

**CHICAGO THIN** In a State Street basement, an 83-year-old lady named Donna Marie Malnati may represent our last link to the genesis of deep-dish pizza. The widow of Rudy Malnati—an early player at Pizzeria Uno—and mother of Pizano's Rudy Malnati Jr., Donna Marie spends her nights fashioning dough balls from an old and secret family recipe. Whatever is in it, the

recipe produces the most addictive thin crust in Chicago. Irresistible caramelized edges here and there give way to a buttery, pastrylike base that recalls deep-dish without the backbreaking bulk. It's got the distinct flavor of history.

864 N. STATE ST. 312-751-1766; TWO OTHER AREA LOCATIONS

## 14 COCO PAZZO COPPA

**THIN** It's a mystery why coppa—a.k.a. capicola, a.k.a. gabagool, a.k.a. dry-cured pork shoulder and neck—doesn't enjoy the same widespread recognition as prosciutto. First of all, Tony Soprano revered it, and secondly, it's more tender than prosciutto, thanks to a higher fat content, which makes it the perfect salumi for pizzas like Coco Pazzo's outstanding lunch-only option. Delicate wisps of coppa collaborate with dabs of tart goat cheese, adorable caramelized cipollini, and even a robust fried egg to create a heady pie. On a lovely bubbled crust full of rugged character, it all comes off flawlessly.

300 W. HUBBARD ST. 312-836-0900

14

**COCO PAZZO****COPPA**

**THIN** It's a mystery why coppa—a.k.a. capicola, a.k.a. gabagool, a.k.a. dry-cured pork shoulder and neck—doesn't enjoy the same widespread recognition as prosciutto. First of all, Tony Soprano revered it, and secondly, it's more tender than prosciutto, thanks to a higher fat content, which makes it the perfect salumi for pizzas like Coco Pazzo's outstanding lunch-only option. Delicate wisps of coppa collaborate with dabs of tart goat cheese, adorable caramelized cipollini, and even a robust fried egg to create a heady pie. On a lovely bubbled crust full of rugged character, it all comes off flawlessly.

**300 W. HUBBARD ST.; 312-836-0900**