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## Food & Wine

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# New York pizza doesn't get any better than this

## GENEROUS SLICE OF HEAVEN ON A THIN CRUST

By Holly Hayes  
Mercury News

The traffic on our neighborhood e-mail group is pretty typical stuff: lost dogs, plumber recommendations, alerts about questionable door-to-door solicitors.

But things really heat up when someone throws out a question about where to get the best pizza. *Especially* if that person is from New York, where -- some people say -- the pizza is the best on the planet.

So when an ex-*Noo Yawker* neighbor gushed about a new place called A Slice of New York, I grabbed a colleague who grew up on Long Island to check it out.

Folks, this is the real deal. Each generous slice of pizza has a thin, flavorful crust with a slight crunch, meant to be folded and eaten in the Manhattan style. Creamy whole milk mozzarella. A zippy, fresh-tasting tomato sauce with perfect consistency. Meaty -- not greasy -- pepperoni, and plenty of it.

After inhaling our slices adorned simply with cheese (\$3.25) and cheese and pepperoni (\$3.50), we also devoured a square of the thicker-crust Sicilian-style pizza (\$3.50). It was intensely tasty, too, but not as special as the thin pie.

We couldn't eat another bite, but drooled when we saw that A Slice of New York also bakes up calzones and strombolis, which are about as hard to find west of Manhattan as thin-crust pizzas. So we ordered one of each to go and shared them with colleagues back at the office. Mr. ex-Long Islander's Saturn never smelled so good.

The house calzone (\$8) stars that fabulous pizza dough, which is pressed into a 10-inch circle and then folded in half over savory ham and rich ricotta and mozzarella cheeses. Edges are crimped, and the pillow of goodness is given a brush with olive oil before going into the gigantic pizza oven.

The house stromboli (\$9, or \$7.50 for the veggie version) is a variation on the calzone theme. Here, the dough is pressed into a rectangle and rolled up with ham, salami, green peppers and onions. Slice it to show off all the ingredients.

Either of these winning dishes could easily serve two as lunch or dinner. They're that big, that rich and that flavorful. Each comes with a side of that great tomato sauce for dipping, and you can add to the fillings (25 cents each addition).

But back to the pizzas. Specialty whole pies (\$17-\$26) are named after such city landmarks as Rockefeller Center, Carnegie Hall and Central Park. Or, you can build your own from a list of toppings and choose from the 14-inch small (\$14 and up) or the 18-inch large (\$18 and up).

There's absolutely nothing fancy about this spick-and-span storefront restaurant, which is nestled narrowly between JJ's Blues and San Jose Surplus on Stevens Creek Boulevard. Order at the register and take a seat if you can; there are exactly four stools set at an L-shaped counter up front.

While you're waiting, take a gander at the eclectic collection of New York ephemera owner Kirk Vartan has amassed, including actual pieces of vintage subway cars and Metropolitan Transit Authority signs and maps. Vartan says he has "so much more stuff" to add to the display.

The business is a labor of love for Vartan, a native New Yorker who moved to San Jose in 1998 to work as an engineer in high-tech. He so dearly missed his daily "slice" that he left Cisco to open the pizza joint.

Which has all the potent flavor of the city, but -- thankfully -- none of its attitude.

A Slice of New York, 3443 Stevens Creek Blvd. (between Tyler and Cypress avenues), San Jose.

**Hours:** 11 a.m.-midnight Tuesdays-Thursdays, 11 a.m.-1 a.m. Fridays-Saturdays, 1 p.m.-midnight Sundays.

**Types of food:** Pizza by the slice, whole pies, calzones, strombolis, Nathan's hot dogs.

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**Average meal price:** \$3.25-\$3.50 per generous slice, whole pies start at \$14.

**Good choices:** Everything we tried. Really.

**Vegetarian options:** Veggie stromboli, Times Square pizza (onions, mushrooms, bell peppers, black olives), Central Park pizza (pesto, bell peppers, chopped garlic).

**Drinks:** Yummy slushy granitas (\$2.50 for 12-ounce, \$3.50 for 20-ounce); flavors change regularly. Also, soft drinks and SoBe teas.

**Eat in car:** Fuggedaboutit, except maybe the hot dogs.

**Next-day edibility:** *If* there's any left over, you bet.

**Who goes there :** Local retail and office workers, drop-ins from JJ's Blues (next door).

**Credit cards:** All major.

**Parking:** There's a little wiggle room right in front, otherwise: on the street

Restaurant reviews are conducted anonymously. The Mercury News pays for all meals.

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