

Restaurants: These pizzerias will hit the spot in early winter

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By Rick Nelson



Photo by Tom Wallace

Papa's Deli owner Mick Brogan

Because my metabolism seems to be hard-wired to crave carbs the moment the snow flies, I've spent the past week obsessed with pizza. Specifically, my never-ending search for the independently owned pizzeria that my neighborhood sorely lacks. My primordial hunger took me to three pizzerias in as many days.

Count me a newly converted fan of [Papa's Deli](#). This north Minneapolis gem feeds its neighborhood with a steady diet of sandwiches, salads and pastas, but the robust pizzas are what caught my appetite. The crusts are thick, chewy and lightly charred, and while the design-your-own toppings selection has a familiar ring to it, I prefer to stick with the "Ann Kaari" (named for the former Minneapolis School Board member), which subs out tomato sauce in favor of a garlicky butter, which is then sprinkled with crisp bacon, juicy chicken and fresh spinach.

One other tip: try the terrific "East Coast Tomato Pie" variation, which drops the marinara in favor of olive oil and straight-up crushed tomatoes, and goes easy on the cheese. Decent prices, too; a 10-incher starts at \$9.99. Oh, and do not leave without checking out the exceptionally light (and crustless) cheesecake.

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