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Keeping It Simple, With an Eye on Tradition



Rob Bennett for The New York Times

FUSS-FREE The wood-fired oven at Frankie and Fanucci's, below, can be seen from the dining room, which fills up early.

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At Frankie and Fanucci's, a pizzeria that has replaced Lia's in the village of Hartsdale, the first thing diners might see is the five-pound can of San Marzano plum tomatoes that doubles as a doorstep on the sidewalk out front. It's a nice improvisational touch, a simple solution that captures the easy practicality and loose charm of the place.



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Frankie and Fanucci's wood-fired oven.

[Frankie and Fanucci's](#), which opened in the spring, serves wood-fired pizzas without the usual wood-fired-pizza posturing. This isn't Williamsburg, it's Hartsdale, and diners hankering for pizzas topped with mizuna, guanciale or hen-of-the-woods mushrooms might be disappointed.

At Frankie and Fanucci's, the Amici pizza comes fully loaded with mozzarella, meatballs, sausage and pepperoni. In a concession to trends, onions are caramelized, but otherwise the list of toppings is what you would expect at a neighborhood pizza joint.

The menu is not limited to pizza. Three big, delicious salads — arugula with goat cheese and pistachios; mixed greens with roasted walnuts, pears and gorgonzola; and a creamy, garlicky Caesar shot through with anchovy — all but upstaged the pizzas we sampled. (Salads arrived with a stack of small white plates and serving spoons to encourage sharing.)

Like the food, the décor is not out to dazzle. Tiled walls and floors, tufted leather upholstery and bare-bulb pendant lighting strike a compromise between old and new. The fuss-free policy is reinforced by plain white plates and wine tumblers. The traditional wood-burning oven is open to view; it and a panini press are the only pieces of cooking equipment in the kitchen.

The Neapolitan-style thin-crust pizzas emerged from the 800-degree oven with admirably charred crusts whose blistered edges had a nice crackly exterior and a tender, chewy sponge. Frankie and Fanucci's gets extra points, too, for using beautiful whole-milk mozzarella, hand-milled plum tomatoes and fresh basil.

The best pie we had was straightforward, with tomato sauce, little pools of milky mozzarella and fennel-tinged sweet sausage. A sauce-free pie of arugula, prosciutto di Parma and mozzarella was light and perfectly baked. Topped with smooth ricotta and fragrant mushrooms, a personally tailored pizza had a lot of flavor — and a lot of moisture, too, which made for a limp crust.

On the utilitarian wine list, four reds and three whites are named by grape variety only. We settled for quartinos of serviceable Chianti (\$8.75) and pinot grigio (\$8).

With its modest prices and refreshingly attitude-free service, Frankie and Fanucci's has quickly won fans. If your group is smaller than six, you cannot make a reservation, so we went early on both a Sunday and a Friday night to avoid a wait. On Friday, we arrived at 6:30 and took the last open table. The noise level rose quickly, partly because of the number of children on hand.

Don't let the commotion deter you from dessert. From the short list, we liked the rich hazelnut gelato. The light-textured tiramisù, made with vanilla wafers, had an excellent espresso kick.

Frankie and Fanucci's

202 East Hartsdale Avenue Hartsdale (914) 725-8400 fandfpizza.com

GOOD

THE SPACE The long, narrow room has a fresh, simple look: tiled walls, tiled floor and tufted leather upholstery. Tiled surfaces amplify noise. Booths and banquettes are more inviting than exposed tables. Wheelchair accessible.

THE CROWD All ages, casually dressed. Popular with extended families.

THE BAR Beer and wine only. Generic varietal wines are sold by the quartino (\$7.25 to \$8.75), as well as by the bottle. Limited selection of imported and domestic beers.

THE BILL Starters, \$4.95 to \$9.95. Personal pizzas start at \$9.25 (toppings, \$1.95 each); large pizzas start at \$14.95 (toppings, \$2.50 each). Salads, \$6.50 to \$8.50. Panini, \$7.50 to \$10.50. Desserts, \$3.50 to \$5.95. Major credit cards accepted.

WHAT WE LIKED Wood-oven-baked littleneck clams; Caesar salad; salad of arugula, goat cheese and pistachios; salad of mixed greens, roasted walnuts, pears and gorgonzola; pizza with mozzarella, spicy sausage and caramelized onion; pizza with ricotta and mushrooms; pizza with mozzarella, prosciutto di Parma and arugula (no sauce); tiramisù, hazelnut and pistachio gelatos.

IF YOU GO Open Monday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Sunday, noon to 9 p.m. Reservations taken for parties of six or more. Street parking is tight; a two-level garage behind the restaurant has ample metered parking in the evening.