
THE WEEKLY DISH

THE PIES HAVE IT: The trick to making a New York style pizza?

“The secret is in the oven,” claims **Mark Neal**. One of four partners behind the new **Matchbox** (713 H St. NW; 202-289-4441) in Chinatown the restaurateur says he’s using the revered **John’s Pizzeria** in the Big Apple as the benchmark for the thin, crisp pies rolled out here

In an attempt to duplicate the heart sources that Neal and company found on their extensive tour of New York’s pizza joints, the quartet hired a mason from Portland, Maine to build a brick oven that could get as hot as 900 degrees; a combination of hickory, cherry, oak and mahogany feed the flames inside. Toppings run from house-made meatballs to chicken pesto and “fire and smoke” (thanks to roasted peppers, chipotle-tomato sauce and smoked gouda in the mix.

The restaurant’s theme is pounded home in the oak veneer tables, each of which is inlaid with actual match boxes, from co-owner **Perry Smith’s** collection, and the shape of the airy, 75- seat restaurant, spread over three floors. Matchboxes, says Neal “are tall and narrow, like our building.

Pizza isn’t the only reason to drop by. **Chef Craig Glufling**, who previously cooked at **Poste** and **Vidalia**, broadens the menu with pecan crusted chicken, grilled steak with potato gratin and rockfish over a hash of juicy rock shrimp, potatoes and pancetta. The sleeper? A plate of juicy mini-burgers—choose three (\$6), six (\$9), or nine (\$12) to a plate—served with a plate of lacy onion rings. And beer mavens should appreciate the draft beer choices from Germany, Belgium, Oregon.

Pizzas \$10-\$17 entrees \$13-\$21.

—**Tom Sietsema**

