

## Light My Fire



Looking for a cozy, authentic pizza joint in DC? Go to Chinatown! The irony can be overwhelming, but after experiencing the décor and inventive fare of the new **Matchbox** restaurant, you won't be left perplexed for too long. Named for its tall and narrow shape, the 75-foot-long 15-foot-wide restaurant/bistro is the latest addition to the booming Gallery Place/Chinatown neighborhood. It was entirely designed and built by the restaurant's four partners and restaurant/nightclub industry veterans **Perry Smith**, a Chevy Chase native, **Drew Kim** and brothers Ty and Mark Neal, all of whom relocated from the Windy City of Chicago to open the place.

The three-level interior includes a bar level, with an exposed kitchen and a custom, hand-built wood-burning oven, "one of the hottest ones in town," according to co-owner Kim, who explains that Matchbox pizza's perfectly crispy, thin crust is the result of the oven's 850F-degree temperature which also enables the record-breaking five-minute cooking time. The mezzanine level houses oversized booths, ideal for keeping private conversations private and above the mezzanine is the exposed main kitchen, giving the place a slight feel of your mother's house and a higher sense of security about the safety of your food. The design concept for Matchbox comes from the school of "less is better;" that is, less of everything except wood, which is used extensively in the restaurant. A unique and humorous added touch is the "dumb waiter," a tray-like contraption suspended by a rope which when pulled like the strings of window blinds transports beverages from the bar downstairs to the second-floor dining area, cutting the waiters some stair-climbing slack. And giving diners a little chuckle.

But a dozen types of pizzas and a "dumb waiter" aside, the restaurant offers a variety of other delectable dishes, cooked to perfection by **Graig Glufing**, a.k.a. Double G, formerly of Hotel Monaco's Poste, Vidalia, and Red Sage.

Next time you're in the neighborhood, drop by and try the mini burgers on toasted brioche appetizer whose size Kim describes as looking like "someone put them in the dryer and shrunk them." Vegetarians can dabble in arugula pear and frizzizzled goat cheese salad or a sandwich of smoked Portobello mushrooms, roasted red peppers, Roma tomatoes, baby spinach, and sundried tomatoes. And for the rest of us, a spicy pecan-crusted chicken breast or a grilled salmon should do the trick.



**MatchBox**  
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