

It's Not Always the Sauce that Makes the Pizza



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You can accuse me of many things: being a bum, a slouch or an overrated restaurant critic who flunked out of review school. But there is one thing for which you must give me credit: I know good pizza when I taste it. Having tasted most of the pizza that is available in North Scottsdale, I'm happy to say that there's a new kid on the block and they know pizza.

I'm talking about 3 Tomatoes & a Mozzarella, located at Pinnacle Peak and Miller Roads in the new shopping center. They call themselves "The Place for Pizza," and they're not kidding.

What I liked most about the place is that it is so different from your typical pizza joint. A small and colorful setting gives it a warm feel, and pleasant piano

music plays at a very appropriate volume. There is a small bar at 3 Tomatoes that can seat about seven patrons. Various wines line the bar. The floor-to-ceiling windows, which face west, offer a nice view of dusk when the shades are opened. For those who love to dine outdoors, even more appealing than the cozy dining room is the simple patio seating that lies just beyond the large windows.

While the venue is quite unique, more importantly, the pizza is too. The menu at 3 Tomatoes is very simple. In fact, I counted a total of 13 items, including the pizzas. I'm sure there is more, but the point remains the same: The menu is not that extensive. Maybe a few restaurants could learn from the example. Sometimes it's nice to say that a restaurant doesn't try to be everything to everyone and that what they do, they do very well. I will say that about this place.

Since we were at "The Place for Pizza," of course we had to try the pizza. There are specialty pizzas on the menu as well as the build your own section, formally called the Neapolitan Pizza

section. On my favorite visit, we opted to give the Quattro Formaggi (\$14 for the small 12"), a pizza from the specialty section, a day in restaurant review court. It just sounded too good to pass up. It included 4 cheeses - Parmesan, Fontina, Gorgonzola, and Asiago. It also had prosciutto, an Italian ham which gives this pizza fantastic flavor. Wait! They're not done. They also throw on some roasted garlic cloves. The crust of the pizza is great, but the nicest thing about these pizzas is they don't really need a lot of sauce; the flavors of the toppings stand on their own. This was great pizza and the small size was plenty for two.

For an appetizer we had to try 3 Tomatoes' namesake salad - Tomato and Mozzarella (\$8). This is listed under the salad section of the menu and includes tomatoes and fresh mozzarella lightly drizzled with virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar, all topped with basil and pistachio nuts. While this was a nice selection, as an appetizer we preferred the focaccia bread (\$2), which is served with olive oil and balsamic vinegar. Absolutely fantastic!

On another visit, we elected to build



our own pizza. There was a nice selection of unique toppings to choose from. We chose roasted garlic and grilled chicken on one half of the pizza and ordered wild mushrooms and roasted red peppers on the second half. Again, we were impressed.

I must also mention the iced tea. While not normally a point of mention, if you like tea, give this a try. According to our waitress, the ownership tasted many teas before settling on this fruity brew, and it shows.

If you haven't yet tried 3 Tomatoes & a Mozzarella, I highly recommend you do. Trust me, you'll tell a friend. They are located at Pinnacle Peak and Miller and can be reached by calling 480-585-6555.

Oh yeah, don't forget to tell them Ian sent you! ■