

The Big Pizza Pivot

By Rob Patronite and Robin Raisfeld



Coco Pizzeria's Burrata pie. Photo: Naoto Ono, Courtesy of COCO PAZZERIA

As might be expected, pizza has boomed nationally during the pandemic. What that macrotrend looks like to the New York dough cognoscenti is not the rise of Domino's or Pizza Hut but a bunch of canny chefs and restaurateurs launching virtual pizza parlors inside their existing restaurants and establishing new brands around their new pies.

1. Coco Pizzeria

307 Spring St.; cocopizzeria.com

The opening of this new Coco Pazzo spinoff brings to mind the movie genre where the old gang gets back together and, in the spirit of enjoying one last hurrah, decides to rob a bank. Some 30 years ago, Pazzo's Pino Luongo hired Ciro Verde to work the pizza oven at his pioneering Chelsea trattoria, Le Madri. Post Le Madri, both went on to open their own restaurants and then fell out of touch. After Verde closed his Brooklyn pizzeria last year because of the pandemic, he reunited with Luongo (along with Coco Pazzo partner Alessandro Bandini), and the result is impressive. Verde's thin-crust pies are light and crisp and fall somewhere on the pizza-style spectrum between the Roman and the Neapolitan. Great new topping combos like the 'nduja-spiked Comma Pica ("How spicy!" in Neapolitan dialect) and the Burrata pie abound. Best of all is the return of Verde's focaccia robiola, the superb cheese-stuffed flatbread invented at Le Madri and inspired by that New York City superfood—the bagel and schmear.