

# DAILY NEWS

50¢

NEW YORK'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

www.nydailynews.com

## FRIDAY FOOD



UPPER CRUST:  
Michael Mogavono works the counter at Pala.

## Any way you slice it, Pala's pie perfection

**P**ala arrived with buzz. Before the Allen St. pizzeria opened, I read about the 12 organic flours and the three, four or five days it takes for the dough to rise. Get real, I thought: New York isn't starved for pizzerias. It's not news when a new one opens.

A pause while I eat my words. Because Pala's pizzas are worth all the fuss.

**eats  
beat**

Neither New York slices nor Neapolitan classics, they are Roman pies made with thin crusts and elegant, fresh toppings. Because each one takes half an hour to make (they don't make it easy for you, do they?), you'll start by sharing an appetizer. Arugula salad is topped with slices of pecorino and sprinkled with pine nuts (\$10); moist house-

cured salmon is scattered with pink peppercorns, capers and thin-shaved fennel (\$12). Nibble on these while you watch the action at the ovens and wait for your pie.

When it arrives, it will be a revelation, with a flexible wheaty crust and a topping that's innovative but not silly. Looking for a Margherita, I ordered Bufala Cruda with blobs of fresh buffalo mozzarella, oven-melted cherry tomatoes and whole basil leaves (\$17). One friend, craving heat, had Fior di Broccoli, made with sausage, broccoli flowers and hot peppers (\$15); the other won the prize with Mediolanum, topped with tomato sauce and melted gorgonzola crisscrossed with fresh asparagus (\$15).

Prices are high, but the pizzas are big enough for two to share. On the other hand, sharing one means you won't taste

as many, so go with a group of friends.

And the place looks great. The waiters all have two-day beards, like extras in an Italian movie. In the daytime, sun pours through a garage-door front wall onto tables holding sprigs of fresh oregano for do-it-yourself seasoning. At night, stylish metal fixtures light the black rear wall and the rack of pizza peels that gave the restaurant its name.

*Irene Sax*

☎ Pala, 198 Allen St., near Houston, (212) 614-7252. Tues.-Fri. 3 p.m. to midnight; Sat.-Sun. noon to midnight. American Express.

### WORTH A TRIP ...

🌸 In the hood  
🏙️ citywide

🌐 In the borough  
🌐 from anywhere