



GOING OUT

The anti-Papa John's

You're all grown up, so eat grown-up pizza

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Palà

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PROFILE If you thought you were serious about pizza, you've never met Gigio Palazzo.

"The reason I started this project with my wife, Edena, is that going around New York City, you occasionally find very good pizza," he says. "But, unfortunately, the pizza to go is, with all due respect, completely different from in Italy. New York, as a melting pot, allows so many variants,

like pizza with penne pasta, which I don't think is particularly appropriate."

The project Palazzo refers to is Palà, which opened on Feb. 1 and is, he claims, the city's first upscale pizza joint.

Passionate about pizza

Palazzo is the kind of guy who can sell you on the idea of gourmet pizza. He talks about flour the way most people talk about politics — with evangelical conviction and for a little too long. His knowledge of the difference between live yeast and dry yeast borders on disturbing. And he's eager to discuss the human digestive process.

"In Italy, we have a saying: 'You are heavy like a pizza.' That means the pizza is very heavy," he says. "Our pizza

is very light. It's highly digestible."

The Italian-born Palazzo opened his first restaurant on the Greek island of Patmos in 1993. Now married to a native New Yorker, he's the co-owner of Terramare Café on East 65th Street.

He says opening a high-end pizza restaurant has been his longtime dream, but he and Edena didn't begin working on the project in earnest until three years ago. Together with master pizzaiolo (and trained chemist) Francesco Etzi, they've created a restaurant that provides an experience closer to what you'll find in a cafe than at a slice joint.



High-quality ingredients

"We have very high food costs," Palazzo says. "But we are not trying to pass that on to the client. It's still pizza."

A one-foot pizza, which can be eaten alone or shared with a salad or antipasto, ranges from \$8 to \$15. Don't expect to pick your toppings, though. Palazzo views each of the 12 pizzas on his menu as a unique item. The clear champion in our eyes is the buffalo cruda, a simple pie topped with cherry tomato sauce, buffalo mozzarella and fresh basil. "It's our best seller, five to one," Palazzo says.

Palazzo is also a firm believer in the combined power of vino and pizza. Palà offers more than 40 wines that range from \$7 to \$11 a glass.

"We want you to come in, have some wine, have a pizza and stay for an hour and a half," Palazzo says. "We don't want to rush our clients."



THE IDEA BEHIND PALÀ is that eating pizza should be like any other dining experience — long and relaxed.

TASHA LUTER/METRO