

**TV:**

What the old, the rich, the young, etc., watch.

The return of the laugh track.  
BY JOSEF ADALIAN

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# NEW YORK

THE UNDERGROUND GOURMET

## Pizza's Progress

A new style of Neapolitan pizza emerges from the oven by way of the Fryolator.

BY ROBIN RAISFELD AND ROB PATRONITE

**B**Y NOW, there's barely a pizza-loving New Yorker unfamiliar with pizza Napoletana, the venerated art form that has infiltrated all corners of the city. Softer and wetter than our homegrown pies, this Italian import has turned the humble tools of the trade—soft Italian 00 wheat flour, buffalo mozzarella, and San Marzano tomatoes—into fetishized objects. But nothing, perhaps, is as obsessed over by puritanical pizzaioli and the people who love them as the wood-burning beehive oven, typically built by fifth-generation craftsmen, and San Marzano tomatoes—into fetishized objects. But nothing, perhaps, is as obsessed over by puritanical pizzaioli and the people who love them as the wood-burning beehive oven, typically built by fifth-generation craftsmen, brick by hallowed brick.

Change may be afoot. There's a new (old) pizza in town, and its construction depends in large part on another, less glamorous piece of kitchen equipment: the deep fryer. The pizza in question is called montanara, and it recently debuted at a couple of New York's buzziest new pizzerias. It just might be the most exciting development on the flatbread front since Gennaro Lombardi first lugged a pie out of his coal oven.

### SCRATCHPAD

**PIZZARTE:** More of an all-around restaurant, PizzArte excels with its fritti and pastas, and its pizza might be midtown's best. Three stars.

### BITES

#### PIZZARTE: IDEAL MEAL:

Verdure trio, montanara pizza, Nutella pizza.

**NOTE:** The communal tables upstairs are great for group pizza binges.

**HOURS:** Daily 11:30 a.m. to 11. **PRICES:** Stuzzicherie and salads, \$7 to \$22; pizza, \$11 to \$23; pasta, \$9 to \$22.

So, you ask, what is this montanara you speak of? It's this: a round of regular pizza dough strategically dimpled like focaccia, then plunged into the deep fryer for a few seconds. After it's fished out, it's placed in a pan and lightly topped: tomato, mozzarella, usually a sharp grated cheese of one sort or another, and basil.

Then it's given a quick whirl in a scorching-hot oven. Depending on whom you ask, the name comes either from the fact that the craggy blob looks vaguely mountainous or that it's in the style of the poor and apparently mountain-dwelling pizzaiolo's wife, who collected the day's leftover dough from her husband and pan-fried it at home to sell for extra cash on the side.

PizzArte in midtown was the first to herald the montanara's arrival hereabouts.

Uptown at PizzArte, a sleek, high-gloss shrine to Neapolitan food and art (the paintings are all for sale), a slightly different montanara eventually made its way onto the menu: Puffier than Forcella's, with no discernible cornicione and considerably less char, this one rises high, like the mountains evoked by the name of the dish. Here, it gets a sprinkle of caciovallo cheese, which adds a welcome sharp tang to the mildly sweet dough. It can be had in miniature form as well, in the frittura all'italiana appetizer, where it appears simply fried, not baked, in the company of crunchy potato croquettes and rice balls, less-crisp matchsticks of zucchini, and unadorned lumps of fried dough called pizza fritters, which might

be taking the whole deep-fried enterprise a little too far. Even if you've made the trek to this polished space simply for the featured attraction, you might consider supplementing your fried-dough quota with the verdure, a very nice plate of marinated zucchini, chile-flecked broccoli rabe, and a luscious heap of soft-cooked eggplant and tomatoes. The menu is rounded out by perfectly fine salads and pastas, including a smoky penne alla Ferdinando and a paccheri festooned with nubbins of salt cod, but most clientele, especially the ebullient clusters of Italian expats, are there for the pizzas, and they're worth the trip. The flavor of the dough is noticeably salty and complex, and the pies characterized by a modest cornicione and a light speckling of char. Service is attentive and well meaning, and although we must steer you away from a bafflingly bad Negroni, there is a Gragnano, Campania's famous "pizza wine," available by the bottle and the glass.

Should you desire dessert, the kitchen offers an off-the-menu pizza Nutella, split and then slathered with the stuff, and showered with cocoa and powdered sugar. It is not, as far as we know, deep-fried, but it doesn't seem to suffer for the lapse.