

From old-school parlors to chi-chi Neapolitan joints to brick ovens on trailers, Vacationland has more and better pie purveyors than ever before.

The Golden Age of Maine



by Will Grunewald, Brian Kevin, Adrienne Perron, Joe Ricchio, and Joel Crabtree

Pizza is Now!

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HEN NANCY ENGLISH took over as the *Portland Press Herald's* food critic in 2005, Maine's dining scene had only a fraction of its current variety, creativity, and buzz — and the state's pizza offerings, in particular, were pretty humdrum. “When I first came to Portland, in the '80s, it was just your classic pepperoni pizza pie,” English recalls. A couple of decades later, little had changed. “The ideal was just huge amounts of cheese and sauce,” she says. “It was all about the quantity of toppings, mozzarella dripping all over everything, and of course, you need a really sturdy crust to handle all that stuff.”

Don't get us wrong, we like the occasional gooey, maximalist slice as much as the next guy, but Maine's pizza offerings have come a long way since English gave up the dining beat in 2011. Credit the artisan-bread revolution, which habituated Mainers to flatbreads and sourdough and charred and blistered crusts. Credit the farm-to-table movement, which expanded our topping horizons and gave us mobile pizza pop-ups at farmers markets and barn dinners. Maybe

even credit the brewery boom, which launched dozens of taprooms with pizza ovens to keep craft-beer fans from overindulging on empty stomachs.

English credits the arrival of Otto Pizza, the now-ubiquitous chain (with nine locations in Maine and 10 more in Massachusetts), which got its start on Congress Street in 2009. Otto sold Mainers on a thin, crispy crust and transcended red sauce and mozzarella: their mashed potato, bacon, and scallion and cranberry, squash, and ricotta pies got a lot of breathless press early on (and frankly, they hold up).

“It was so exciting when Otto started — just like, ‘Wow!’” English remembers. “Thin crust, really modest amounts of toppings. It was more about flavor, and they were messing with your head with toppings — mashed potatoes, the carb-on-carb thing. That was really thrilling.”

Maine, she says, was “ripe for the mouthwatering version versus the same old version,” as a decade-plus of proliferating pizzerias has proven. These days, Mainers can find authentic Neapolitan on the midcoast and Jersey-style thin crust down east and arugula on the toppings menu from Portland to Augusta to Fort Kent, not to mention plenty of throwback parlors that have withstood the test of time. Maine's pizza scene is booming. Read on for where to get a slice of the action. — BRIAN KEVIN

## 30 Can't-Miss Maine Pies

### Intervale Pizza at the New Gloucester Village Store

New Gloucester

#### BROCCOLI

Anyone who grew up with parents who pushed vegetables by smothering them in melted Velveeta will feel a certain nostalgia about this one. The broccoli is dressed up with garlicky ricotta and cheddar (an upgrade on Velveeta), and roasted onions add smoky sweetness, all on a hearty crust that holds up against the decadent cheesiness.

A delightful and grown-up take on a classic nutritional compromise. 405 Intervale Rd. 207-926-4224. [ngvillagestore.com](http://ngvillagestore.com)

### Cushnoc Brewing Co.

Augusta

#### MILL PARK PIE

When servers at the capital's essential wood-fired-pizza pub set this one down on the giant tomato cans they use as tabletop pedestals, the confetti-like shaved brussels sprouts

make the Mill Park Pie look like a party. Roasted butternut squash, bacon, mozzarella, and some generous swirls of balsamic round it out, a perfect triangulation of savory, sweet, and smokey — plus a little crunch from those brussels. Cushnoc's thin-crust pies are never over-charred and pair nicely with their crisp and malty Kresge Kölsch beer. 243 Water St. 207-213-6332. [cushnocbrewing.com](http://cushnocbrewing.com)

### Lazzari

Portland

#### BOLOGNESE

Sure, you love it on pasta, but the rich, spicy complexity of a great bolognese is just as terrific spread across one of Lazzari's featherlight, 10-inch, Neapolitan-style crusts. No sloppy marinara base here — Lazzari's bolognese is meat-forward, slow-cooked beef and pork hearty enough to carry the pizza with just

a few dollops of house ricotta and mozzarella and a few stray basil leaves alongside. 618 Congress St. 207-536-0368. [lazzariportland.com](http://lazzariportland.com).

### Furbish Brew House & Eats

Rangely

#### BARBECUE CHICKEN

Furbish Brew House, with its fine view of Rangely Lake, adroitly adapted modish Neapolitan-style pizza to the environs. Whether it's AT thru-hikers ducking into town, day trekkers returning from Bigelow Preserve, skiers done with a day at Saddleback, or fishermen or paddlers coming off the lake, the clientele is inclined to be extra hungry. So it's good that the crust is a little sturdier and that the toppings are applied liberally. And sweet, zingy barbecue chicken feels particularly rewarding — and calorically restorative — after an exertive day in the great outdoors. 2541 Main St. 207-864-5847.



### The Cabin

Bath

#### SHRIMP SCAMPI

Across the street from Bath Iron Works, this cash-only, rathskeller-ish, proletarian hangout is coming up on its 50th (!) anniversary in 2023. Somewhere along the line, a dining writer apparently proclaimed it, “the only real pizza in Maine” — which, who knows, may have made sense at the time and

today is the restaurant's somewhat inscrutable slogan. In any case, the Cabin turns out thick-crust, delivery-style pies, the floppy slices always generously topped. The cult order is the shrimp scampi, a hefty scatter of gulf shrimp over a bed of super-garlicky white sauce. Most Cabin pies benefit from a grease-skimming napkin dab before you dig in. 552 Washington St. 207-443-6224. [cabinpizza.com](http://cabinpizza.com)





A few of Radici's gorgeously simple pizzas. Previous spread, left: Radici's margherita.

cream sauce, and melty brie on a perfectly freckled crust. It's pure, delicious earthiness. The only way to improve upon it would be to order an accompanying bourbon. 336 Main St. 207-244-8247. [hearthandharbor.net](http://hearthandharbor.net)

**Maine Beer Co.**  
Freeport

**MARGHERITA**  
Maine Beer Company got to be one of the state's best breweries by keeping things simple: no smoothie sours or milkshake IPAs here, just a concise, expertly executed lineup of classic styles. It stood to reason that, once they started serving pizza at their Freeport taproom, they'd figure out how to nail the most elemental of pies, the Neapolitan paragon, the margherita. They don't mess with the time-tested design: crust

charred just so, bright tomato sauce, soft gobs of fresh mozzarella, and a few aromatic leaves of basil. It's like their bottle labels say: "Do what's right." 525 Rte. 1. 207-221-5711. [mainebeercompany.com](http://mainebeercompany.com)

**Oysterhead Pizza**  
Damariscotta

**DR. GONZO**  
It wasn't so long ago that the best pizza Damariscotta had to offer came from a gas station. Oysterhead changed the game in the midcoast's Twin Villages when it opened in 2019, its wood-fired oven turning out indulgently topped pizzas on sublimely chewy thin crusts. The Dr. Gonzo is characteristically rich, topped with both mozzarella and Gruyère, foraged mushrooms, and a marsala duxelle — that is, a decadent spread of cooked-down mushrooms and

**Monte's Fine Foods**  
Portland

**MANZO**  
It means "beef" in Italian, but the simple name of this decadent pie kind of sells it short: the Manzo is topped with aged provolone, sweet potatoes, roasted onions, greens, and, yeah, braised beef. Monte's uses light and crispy pinsa-Romana-style crust, a multi-grain, cold-fermented flatbread that takes 72 hours to make and that owners Steve Quattrucci and Neil Rouda say is easier to digest than traditional pizza dough. 788 Washington Ave. 207-613-9873. [montesportland.com](http://montesportland.com)

**Radici**  
Portland  
**MARINARA**  
Chef Randy Forrester's crust is a thing of beauty, forming a pillowy, char-dappled ring around every pizza, delicately crisp on the outside, tender inside. Plus, natural leavening yields a characteristic sourdough tang. That's why Forrester can pull off a nearly naked marinara pizza, graced only by bright tomato sauce, garlic, oregano, and black pepper. Nothing else necessary.

Mediocre crusts might hide under tons of sauce, fistfuls of cheese, and loads of toppings, but a crust as superlative as this deserves to show off. 52 Washington Ave. 207-835-6012. [radiciportland.com](http://radiciportland.com)

**Hearth & Harbor**  
Southwest Harbor  
**MUSHROOM**  
If ever there was a pizza for cooler days and longer nights, that'd be the deeply savory mushroom pie at Hearth & Harbor, with slices of shiitakes, mushroom

# Standing Pat

A UBIQUITOUS PART OF MAINE'S RESTAURANT LANDSCAPE FOR SOME 70 YEARS, PAT'S PIZZA IS A COMFORTING CONSTANT.

**MY AFFINITY** for Maine's stalwart, unassuming Pat's Pizza chain is multifaceted. It involves vivid memories of pitching for my Little League team, the Firemen, and of the postgame spoils: slice after slice from Pat's, washed down with an ocean of cold soda. Thirty years later, I'd replace the soda with cheap red wine, the ideal pairing with their hot-sausage and canned-mushroom pizza. Pat's always gives you a choice of fresh or canned mushrooms, and most anyone I care to spend time with agrees that the canned ones are better. Pat's is the kind of pizza that begs to be showered with Parmesan and chili flakes and most definitely warrants a side of ranch, to dunk the buttery, golden crust into.

Growing up, I had no idea there were Pat's Pizzas other than the one in my hometown of Yarmouth. And I had no idea how deep the restaurant's roots were until a recent conversation with co-owner Bruce Farnsworth, who told me how his father, Pat, had founded the original Orono location during the Great Depression. It's still there, on Mill Street, the epitome of "American pizzeria" in both menu and atmosphere.

In its first incarnation, in 1931, it was Farnsworth's Cafe, an ice-cream parlor that Pat opened when the building's owner offered him the place for a meager \$150, after a previous tenant vacated in the middle of the night. Soon after opening, Pat did an astonishing \$800 in sales on a single Saturday. So he went all in, adding a grill for hot dogs and hamburgers, and soon, he was offering telephone-order delivery to the UMaine campus nearby. "At the time," 74-year-

old Bruce reminded me, "phone numbers were still only three digits long."

After Prohibition's repeal, Pat put in a taproom and started pouring beers, and he kept expanding the menu throughout the 1940s. In the early '50s, when a nearby competitor called Pizza House started picking up steam, Pat and his wife, Fran, started researching their own pizza recipe. The day they debuted it, they aimed to sell 50 pizzas — and ended up moving 150, Bruce says. By then, everyone around Orono simply referred to the place as "Pat's," so when the Farnsworths decided to morph into a pizzeria, they rolled with the nickname. The first satellite location came into being when a man from Prince Edward Island visited his girlfriend at UMaine and fell in love with the pizza. He worked with the Farnsworths to open a Pat's in his hometown and eventually designed the logo that any Mainer will recognize.

Pat worked seven days a week until his 90th birthday — he was known around Orono for his good nature, suspenders, and cigar — and died in 2003, at age 93. Today, with Bruce and his longtime friend Johnny Kyle overseeing 16 locations across the state, Pat's is as much a part of Maine culture as anyplace slinging lobsters or Italians. The pizza essentials are the same from one location to another — the dough for that crust, Fran's sauce recipe — but each town's Pat's has its own vibe and menu embellishments (Yarmouth has a veggie quiche pie; Orono has a pastrami). After talking with Bruce, the core menu reads to me like a history book. The classics endure. — JOE RICCHIO



Right: Bruce Farnsworth, Pat's Pizza scion, at the retro counter in Orono. His dad (who looks on from the staff tees) opened the place as a dairy bar and soda fountain in 1931.



The original Pat's Pizza, 11 Mill St., Orono. 207-866-2111. [patspizzaarono.com](http://patspizzaarono.com)





### Flight Deck Brewing

Brunswick

#### BARREL ROLL

Some questionable things wind up on pizzas — pickles? anchovies? — but brown sugar is downright unusual. Flight Deck's Barrel Roll is a maximally garlicky white pie, with garlic-infused olive oil as well as a heap of minced garlic melted in with the mozzarella. The garlic might overwhelm if not for a sweet undertone from none other than brown sugar. (Add bacon to round out the flavor profile and add some crunch.) Also notable: the Barrel Roll is cut into strips rather than slices, turning it into a shareable riff on (and big improvement over) breadsticks. 11 Atlantic Ave. 207-504-5133. [flightdeckbrewing.com](http://flightdeckbrewing.com)

### Lincolnville General Store

Lincolnville

#### NO. 3

Glistening roasted red peppers, deep-green leaves of kale, and satiny little dollops of ricotta, all framed by a bubbled and blackened crust — sometimes, pizza is

as much a visual delight as a culinary one. The No. 3 on Lincolnville General's pizza menu is as pretty as a pie can be and tastes great too. The crust is chewy with a bit of crackle, and house-made tomato sauce and a layer of mozzarella tie all the other toppings together in beautiful bite after beautiful bite. 269 Main St. 207-763-4411. [lincolnvillegeneral.com](http://lincolnvillegeneral.com)

### Oxbow Beer Garden

Oxford

#### 'NDUJA

It might look at first as if the pizza maker skimped on the 'nduja, a spreadable Italian-style pork sausage, but any more of it and your mouth would be a *fuoco* (on fire). Plus, red slivers of Calabrian chilies (fitting, since 'nduja also originated in Calabria) add more kick. Oxbow Brewing Company's Oxford location is a former Nordic ski center, and after exploring the trails out back, a skier will feel warm again in a hurry with an 'nduja pie. It's not only

about the heat, though. Roasted garlic lends earthy depth, a drizzle of honey adds sweetness, and the crust has some sourdough bite, all adding up to a satisfyingly nuanced pizza. 420 Main St. 207-539-5178. [oxbowbeer.com](http://oxbowbeer.com)

### Bangor Sandwich Co.

Bangor

#### SUPREME

Detroit-style pizza, which Bangor Sandwich Co. brought to the Queen City in fall 2020, is a pan pizza not as deep or doughy as Chicago style and not as cakey as Sicilian. You can eat it with a fork, but if cutlery strikes you as too refined, the bottom is crispy enough to pick up, as are the sides, since cheese and toppings extend to the edges, where they blacken slightly. Cupping pepperoni is the classic topping, but Bangor Sandwich Co. gilds that lily with Italian sausage, mushrooms, red onion, green pepper, and black olives — to great effect. 25 Hammond St. 207-573-1361. [bangorsandwich.com](http://bangorsandwich.com)



# Claws Off

## KEEP YOUR CRUSTACEANS AWAY FROM MY PIZZA.

**LOBSTER IS GREAT.** Pizza is great. In Maine, though, they too often get crossed, and lobster pizza is not great. In fact, it stinks.

Or at least that's how I've always felt about it. Pizza requires textural harmony — the crunch and chew of crust against the sauce and the melty cheese. Classic toppings, from pepperoni to mushrooms to onions, are classic in part because they don't throw off that balance. Well-cooked lobster, however, is firm and a little springy, and that doesn't jibe. Plus, lobster's subtle sweetness is easily obscured, which

is why a white-bread bun remains the time-tested vessel for lobster meat and why any more dressing than a little mayo is excessive. On pizza, the flavor is wasted. Why not just throw some tofu on there?

Recently, I made this argument to Kerry Altiero, chef-owner of Rockland's Cafe Miranda and maker of delicious pizzas and lobster dishes, though he was loathe to serve either when he opened 30 years ago. (Regarding the former: "You say, 'Oh, a brick oven — must be a pizzeria. I wasn't about to get pigeonholed.'" And the latter: "Everyone else was already serving it.") Then, in 2012, he entered the Maine Lobster Chef of the Year cook-off on a lark, won it, and figured it was finally time to serve lobster. That was around when he introduced pizzas too, and so his take on lobster pizza came to be, with mozzarella, roasted red pepper, diced tomato, basil, and spinach.

But is he a true believer in lobster pizza? "Actually, I'm probably with you," Altiero admitted. "I'm not a traditionalist, but there are certain lines that are better not crossed."

When Cafe Miranda reopened in 2020 after a brief pandemic hiatus, Altiero started selling Sicilian-ish slabs outside. Now, he's back to doing regular pizzas as well, but he dropped the lobster version. Still, just talking about it gets his cogs spinning. "Skip the tomato sauce," he suggested. "And you'd have to bake it, like, two-thirds of the way before adding lobster, so you don't destroy the meat. Or, okay, maybe you top it with chopped fresh lobster that isn't hot, tossed with some olive oil, parsley, and lemon. Yeah. I could see that."

— WILL GRUNEWALD



In the oven and on the peel at Bruno's, in Bath.

### Bruno's Wood-Fired Pizza

Bath & Hallowell

#### MUFFULETTA

The muffuletta is the classic New Orleans sandwich: ample layers of olive spread, various deli meats, and provolone crammed between top and bottom slices of a focaccia-ish sesame-seed bread. Bruno's takes the concept and mashes it up with meat-lovers pizza: crust instead of sesame-seed bread, tomato sauce, and mozzarella instead of provolone, all loaded up with capocollo, prosciutto, soppressata, and olive salad. A darn tasty homage. 128 Front St., Bath. 207-371-7000. 192 Water St., Hallowell. 207-213-6634. [brunoswfp.com](http://brunoswfp.com)

### DiOddo's Pizza

Fort Kent

#### CARMELLO

When Robert Oddo moved from Ohio to Maine, eventually settling at the state's northern tip, he brought with him press clippings about his old restaurant, La

Pizzeria Di'Oddo, that now hang on the walls of his new pizza joint, DiOddo's. He also bought along his old method of making dough: he lets it go through an extended fermentation and doesn't add olive oil, so he can stretch it into a remarkably airy crust, like a freshly baked and impossibly thin baguette. On the Carmello, that crust is crowned with a colorful, flavorful combo of mozzarella, arugula, cherry tomatoes, and sweet, smoky ham, then accented by a lightly acidic drizzle of lemon vinaigrette. 112 West Main St. 207-231-5300.

### Morano's Authentic Pizza

Lubec

#### TRIPLE MEAT

Maine's easternmost pizzeria, at the foot of the FDR Memorial Bridge to New Brunswick's Campobello Island, is run by two New Jerseyans turned Mainers offering Jersey-style thin crust. After Ginny Morano moved to Lubec in 2004, she perfected making

her own pizzas at home, but the then-IT consultant had long fantasized about opening a pizzeria. In 2017, after Jersey buddy Dee Kosch moved to town, the pair decided to make a (seasonal) go of it. Morano's crust is crispy without being cracker-like, sturdy enough to handle the weight of the Triple Meat pie's pepperoni, Italian sausage, and what the menu calls "ground beef" — that's Jersey-speak for hamburger. 53 Pleasant St. 207-733-0137. [moranospizza.com](http://moranospizza.com)

### Tinder Hearth

Brooksville

#### FETA, TAHINI, AND ZA'ATAR

Brooksville's much-admired 15-year-old brick-oven bakery changes its offerings with each pizza night (mellow garden and barn dining in summer, takeout in winter). Toppings are overwhelmingly sourced from around the Blue Hill peninsula, so what's

available locally is what's for dinner. But Tinder Hearth has a penchant for Mediterranean pies, and if you catch a night when feta, tahini, and the Middle Eastern spice za'atar are on the menu (maybe with red peppers or eggplant), you're in for an herbal, nutty treat. 1452 Coastal Rd. 207-326-8381. [tinderhearth.com](http://tinderhearth.com)

### Coletti's Pizza Factory

Biddeford

#### PRIMAVERA

A pioneer of Neapolitan pizza in Maine, Francesco Coletti moved to coastal Maine from Naples (Italy, not Sebago) in the '90s and opened his Route 1 hole-in-the-wall in 2000. Coletti's primavera pizza is a lovely showcase for his pillowy Neapolitan crust, topped with a subtle garlic sauce beneath a few dollops of fresh ricotta, basil, and a seasonal mix of roasted veggies. Delicious simplicity. 497 Elm St. 207-571-4476. [colettispizza.com](http://colettispizza.com)

### Portland Pie Co.

Bangor, Biddeford, Brunswick, Portland, Scarborough, Waterville, Westbrook, Windham

#### VEGAN OLD ORCHARD

A nearly 25-year-old chain that's not so much exciting as it is reliable — and known for its bagged dough in grocery stores — PPC nonetheless gets high marks for offering options to folks with dietary restrictions: vegan cheese, gluten-free crust, and cauliflower crust. The faux-cheese is Daiya plant-free mozzarella, which has a reputation for being the meltiest, most mozz-like on the hit-or-miss vegan scene. Put it on an Old Orchard pie, with its hefty handfuls of artichoke hearts, roasted red peppers, green peppers, mushrooms, and garlic, and now you've got someplace to dine out with your vegan pals that you're rarely all that far from in central and southern Maine. Eight locations. [portlandpie.com](http://portlandpie.com)



Fresh from the oven, a 'za at Oxbow Beer Garden.

CAIT BOURGALT (OXBOW); SHUTTERSTOCK (LOBSTER)

MARK FLEMING (BRUNO'S)



### American Flatbread

Rockport

#### PUNCTUATED EQUILIBRIUM

Flatbread Company, the New England-grown chain that's had a popular presence on the Portland waterfront since 1999, recently split its empire in two, the result of legal wrangling between partners. The original company got the venerable Portland location. The

newly renamed American Flatbread, with just one Maine location, in Rockport, got the best pizza off the old menu. Kalamata olives, roasted red pepper, red onion, goat cheese from Brooksville's Sunset Acres Farm, and a conservative helping of mozzarella are made extra fragrant by liberal doses of rosemary and garlic. Cut in long strips, the wood-fired crust is nonetheless foldable,

so it's dangerously easy to overindulge. 399 Rte. 1. 207-706-4146. [americanflatbread.com](http://americanflatbread.com)

### Luiggi's Pizzeria

Lewiston

#### WHITE PIZZA #2

A Lewiston staple since the 1950s, Luiggi's is where to fill up on Italians, pasta, or decent pizza without putting a dent in your wallet. Better than decent is the oh-so-simple, cheeseless White Pizza #2: a puffy, chewy crust rubbed down with olive oil, garlic, and lots of oregano and topped with tomato, onions, and green pepper. If you're not ordering a specialty pie, beware the sneaky ham, which comes on every regular pizza by default. (Really.) 63 Sabattus St. 207-782-0701. [luiggispizza.com](http://luiggispizza.com)

### When Pigs Fly Pizzeria

Kittery

#### MEDJOOI DATE AND SOPRESSATA SALAMI

Ashley Labell, executive chef at Kittery's outlet-adjacent bread-and-pizza emporium, is into creative pairings. Her best is dates and salami, which she says offers "the perfect combo in your mouth in every bite — sweetness from the dates and an intense aromatic punch from the salami." Plus, some kick from drizzled Mike's Hot Honey, a blend of honey, vinegar, and chiles, available in the bread-and-gifts shop next door. 460 Rte. 1. 207-438-7036. [whenpigsflypizzeria.com](http://whenpigsflypizzeria.com)

### Slab Sicilian Street Food

Portland

#### SPICY MEAT

Bit of a scandal on the old

Portland food scene back in 2013 when baker Stephen Lanzalotta split with his employers at the East End's venerable Micucci's Grocery and opened Slab in the former Portland Public Market, taking with him his recipe for his thick-crust, rectangular Sicilian hand pies. Lanzalotta's slabs weigh in at a pound and are unfailingly (and accurately) described as "pillowy," with the cheese and sauce soaking into the puffy, slow-fermented dough. The truly indulgent order is the Spicy Meat, with pepperoni and pepperoncinis in piquant red-pepper sauce, strewn with mozzarella and provolone — plus a blue cheese sauce for dipping. Come hungry. 25 Preble St. 207-245-3088. [slabportland.com](http://slabportland.com)

### Micucci's Grocery

Portland

#### PEPPERONI SLAB

Back at Micucci's, the Sicilian slab is still on the menu, a version that's heavier on the cheese and sauce than at the aforementioned Slab, and the sauce is on the sweeter side too. Some Portlanders have an allegiance to either the 73-year-old Italian grocer or its former baker's offshoot, but we say, why pick sides? 45 India St. 207-775-1854.

### Finelli New York Pizzeria

Ellsworth

#### BIANCA

Floppy, New York-style thin crust from a no-frills shop that's lured Ellsworthians (and won over plenty of MDI-bound tourists) for 20 years. Ricotta lover? The house specialty Bianca piles lavish amounts of the soft, sweet cheese on a bed of spinach, garlicky olive oil, and mozzarella. In true New York fashion, Finelli offers it by the slice. 12 Rte. 1. 207-664-0230. [finellipizzeria.com](http://finellipizzeria.com)

### Pizza By Alex

Biddeford

#### YAYA'S GREEK

Talk about old-school: the Mantis family has run this iconic Biddo joint since 1960. Only personal pizzas here, little 10-inch wonders cooked in metal pans and using Wisconsin cheddar in lieu of mozzarella. The Yaya's Greek pizza piles on nice salty feta, spinach, and plenty of onions. 93 Alfred St. 207-283-0002. [pizzabyalexmaine.com](http://pizzabyalexmaine.com)

### Coals

Portland

#### BAYSIDE

Offering grilled pizza on the thinnest of thin crusts, Coals has been a recurring top-five contender in *Down East's* annual Best of Maine reader poll since opening in 2019. The paper-thin crust, grilled fast at high heat, bubbles and chars, while the cheese is applied modestly and the toppings are none too moist or gloppy (otherwise, it'd be sog city). The Bayside, with fresh mozz, goat cheese, and a huge pile of spicy

arugula atop house-made pistachio pesto, is zesty and delicious. 118 Preble St. 207-747-5747. [coalsportland.com](http://coalsportland.com)

### Nora Belle's

Bridgton

#### BUTTERNUT SQUASH, ARUGULA, ROASTED-GREEN-TOMATO SAUCE

Eating at Nora Belle's feels like being in on a secret. Not a year old, it has an open kitchen where chef-owner Calvin Gorrell feeds pizzas into a volcanic-rock oven imported from Italy. The crust that comes out is perfectly puffy, crisp outside and soft inside. Since the menu changes daily, it's hardly worth recommending a pie, but Gorrell's had diners rave about his butternut squash and arugula over a sauce of roasted green tomatoes — a sweet, tangy, and peppery combo. The place is small, so make reservations to eat in. 2 Cottage St. 207-803-8698. [noralbelle.com](http://noralbelle.com)

### Uproot Pie Co.

Thomaston

#### PEACH, PANCETTA, AND WHIPPED RICOTTA

Jessica Shepard's mobile wood-fired ovens are mainstays at the Camden and Rockland farmers markets, as well as pop-ups around the midcoast, where Uproot has a cult following (last summer, it was a weekly presence at Union's Pour Farm nanobrewery, where Shepard hopes to return). The delightfully supple sourdough crusts — from a spring-water-fed starter — are canvases for whatever's in season. "I'm very proud of our dough," Shepard says. "Then, you just add anything our farmers have a lot of that week." In late summer, regulars clamor for peach pies, with fruit from Unity's Hubbard Brook Farm. "People wait all season — it's no joke," Shepard says. "The peaches are tender and juicy, and the pancetta is crispy, and the ricotta is a little sweet. It's just everything your tastebuds want." Off season, Uproot sells bake-at-home pizza kits from a new permanent kitchen in Thomaston. 9 Green St. 207-370-1568. [theuprootpico.com](http://theuprootpico.com)



B-52 Pizza & Subs. 20 Main St., Limestone. 207-325-6091. [b52subs.com](http://b52subs.com)

# Bombs Away

I DROVE 450 MILES TO EAT A PIZZA TOPPED WITH RED SNAPPER HOT DOGS AND HUMPTY DUMPTY ALL DRESSED POTATO CHIPS SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO. (BUT ACTUALLY, MAYBE YOU SHOULD.)

**THE WEBSITE** *Thrillist*, which has made over-the-top food experiments into something of a beat, recently attempted to define a stunt pizza. "Very much an 'I know it when I see it' situation, in which a pizzeria is seeking to create not only fine flavors, but also that extra 'wow' factor that moves the imagination and accumulates Instagram likes," the site offered. Perhaps you've encountered social-media pics of a Hoboken parlor's \$80 pizza with a whole platter of tacos and guac? The mac-and-cheese pizza from Za, in Boston? The Des Moines-made pie topped with cream cheese and Fruit Loops?

Enter the Maine Attraction, from Limestone's B-52 Pizza & Subs, which opened in the tiny Arrostook town last March. The toppings suggest a stunt pizza: marinara, mozzarella, sliced-up red-snapper hot dogs, and a generous pile of Humpty Dumpty All Dressed potato chips. Red snappers are, of course, the Maine summertime treat produced with natural casings and Red #40 food dye by August Bangor butcher W.A. Bean & Sons. Humpty Dumpty is the beloved-in-Maine cheapie chip brand known for puzzling flavors like Ketchup and Sour Cream & Clam.

The Maine Attraction passes the Instagram test. I posted a pic after driving in December to the northeastern corner of the County to try one. The crust was mouthwateringly puffy, the ridged chips lightly charred, the glistening hot-dog slices tinting the cheese around them pink. The pic garnered more comments than anything I posted all year. "Every time someone orders one, I laugh, because I was bored one night, and it just kind of worked," owner Dustin Mancos says. A 29-year-old Caribou native and an Arrostook County restaurateur since he was 22, he calls hot dogs "one of my favorite food groups." His friend Joe Lapierre, who designed the restaurant, suggested adding chips. "People come in not knowing if it'll be the best thing they've ever tried or the worst," Mancos says, "but everybody seems to like it."

My take: not half bad and probably even better after a couple of beers. The pizza gets some mild umami from the snappers and a vinegary tang from the chips, which are added halfway through baking, so they retain their crunch. But the Maine Attraction is only the second-best reason to drop in on B-52: Mancos and Lapierre designed the place as a tribute to the Loring Air Force Base, which made Limestone thrum from 1947 until it closed in 1994, covering the walls and counters with fascinating bios of notable airmen and detailed schematics of B-52 bombers and nuclear-weapons storage areas. I left knowing a bunch more about the storied Maine base. "I like to pay attention to the heritage of the town," Mancos says. Also, to deliver, B-52-like, the occasional gut bomb. — B.K.



When Pigs Fly's date and salami pie — and a look behind the scenes at the wood-fired pizzeria.

DANIELLE SYKES (WHEN PIGS FLY); BRIAN KEVIN (B-52)