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LENNEY GILMORE/REDEYE

WORTH A TRIP

FRIED DOUGH

John's Pizzeria, 2104 N. Western Ave. 773-384-1755

By Michael Nigrant | FOR REDEYE

There are secrets, and there are twists. Sometimes the secrets are buried in the twists. Such is the case at John's Pizzeria Ristorante and Lounge, a third-generation-run restaurant in Logan Square, where there's a delicious bit of magic in the very accurately (and very cumberdomously) named dessert known as twisted buttered sweetened fried dough (\$6.95 for an order of six).

I'd been going to John's for years for pizzas (which start at \$10.25 for a medium; at John's they don't do small), which on a good day can hold their own with the square-cut, cracker-crustured pies at local institutions such as Vito & Nick's in Ashburn or Marie's Pizza & Liquors in Mayfair. As one who always heeds the siren song of deep-fried cheese sticks, jalapeno poppers, mushrooms, onion rings and zucchini sticks, I would always make room for the breaded sampler (\$8.60), too.

This meant I rarely left space in my stomach for dessert. And even if I had, John's always seemed like the kind of place you'd finish the night off with a cannoli. But on a recent night, my wife asked our server to name the best dessert on the menu. Most of the evening, our server's enthusiasm level was that of a utilitarian diner waitress, but when asked about dessert, her eyes grew wide and she breathlessly declared that we must

get the twisted dough, as if our mortality depended on it.

Plenty of chain pizzerias sprinkle sugar on their pizza dough and peddle it as dessert breadsticks, but that's not what John's is up to. This is not a breadstick, but rather a hot doughnut-like cloud of comfort dripping in butter and crusted in powdered sugar and cinnamon. After eating three of them, I stuffed another in my mouth, half of it dangling from my mouth like a cigar as I paid the bill and walked out the door.

Much of John's menu (and decor—think golden wood paneling and vinyl banquettes) is from 1957, when John Imburgia opened the pizzeria to cook his Sicilian family recipes. Today, the place is run by his son Larry and his grandson John; Larry's brother Tony was also involved until he passed away in 2010. The dough is a recent innovation—added to the menu about five years ago—and I was so mesmerized by it that I prodded Larry for details. Was it made from the same dough they use for the pizza? “Yeah, sort of, but there's a few twists, a few secrets in there that we do,” he said. “I can't tell you what it is.”

MICHAEL NAGRANT IS A REDEYE SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR.

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