



White Truffle pizza



Devil in the White City pizza



Interior of Craft Pizza

HILARY HIGGINS PHOTOS FOR REDEYE



Bacon Bianca pizza



La Dolce Vita pizza



A customer at Craft Pizza

# Another slice

**Pizzeria Serio from Lakeview branches out to Wicker Park with Craft**

By Michael Nagrant | FOR REDEYE

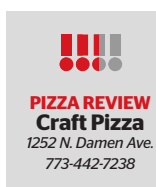
Sometimes one is not enough. Though Scott Toth's Lakeview restaurant Pizzeria Serio has been turning out good brick-oven-fired, Neapolitan-style pies for the past four years, he wanted more. He'd been honing his craft, working on new dough formulas, different ingredient combinations and even a new sauce. "I wanted to kick it up a notch," Toth said. And so when a space opened up in Wicker Park, he jumped at the opportunity to open up a second pizza parlor, Craft, a refined approach to what he'd been doing at Serio.

**The crust:** At Craft, Toth allows his dough to ferment and rise for 24 hours at room temperature, a method that leads to a crust with a serious interior chew and a crackling exterior. The crust at Craft is its greatest asset, but while the texture of the pies was very good, they didn't quite have the contrasts—the soft bubbles and random bits of char and caramelization—you might find on a great brick oven or Neapolitan-style pizza. Though the pizzas I tried weren't undercooked, they were almost a uniform beige color. Maybe a couple more minutes in the oven would add a little extra blister and a more golden hue?

**The toppings:** Craft's ingredient list includes candied bacon and truffle oil as well as pecorino romano, grana padano and gorgonzola cheeses. Toth also expects to offer up seasonal veggies and herbs including spinach and oregano from his home garden. In some ways, these kinds of ingredients are the reason Craft exists. "Serio is in Lakeview. It's more traditional. There are a lot of families and kids. Wicker Park is more eclectic. I had some ideas about flavor combinations that I thought would be more well-received there," Toth said. Of all the flavor combos at Craft, Toth said the most-ordered so far had been the neighborhood namesake Wicker Pork pizza (\$17 for the 14-inch size; \$21 for 18-inch) featuring Canadian bacon, pineapple and curls of red onion. The interplay of smoke from the bacon and sweetness from the pineapple and onion made it my favorite as well. The Devil in the White City pie (\$20 for the 14-inch size; \$24 for 18-inch) features capicola, hot cherry peppers, pepperoncini, black pepper, garlic and red onion; though I liked the spicy, meaty capicola, the



Wicker Pork pizza



whole pizza was mouth-searing and out of balance. The sausage pizza also was disappointing, topped with dry sausage that was sliced thin like pepperoni and therefore almost flavorless.

**The sauce:** The sauce is made from tomatoes grown by an Italian olive oil producer, Sogno Toscano, that Toth recently discovered. "They're bright; I don't use a lot of seasoning," he said. Indeed the sauce has a nice, slightly acidic tomato flavor with a mellowing, sweet finish. On the other hand, while it complements the pizza well, it's almost forgettable; the best sauces around town have a deeply savory punch that Craft's sauce was missing.

**Other stuff:** Toth said he plans to serve fresh house-baked bagels and coffee in the mornings soon. There are also a couple salads, garlic-cheese breadsticks and a veggie- and cheese-laden antipasti plate.

**The bottom line:** You can tell that Toth has spent a great amount of time honing his crust, but he still needs to work on perfecting his sauce and the balance and quality of ingredients if Craft is to become a destination pizzeria. That said, if you happen to live in the neighborhood, Craft is a good place to have around.

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