

The Raven lands on Lonsdale

Deana Lancaster

North Shore News

Wednesday, July 09, 2008

Oh those summer nights.

I spend much of the year slopping through puddles on and around Lonsdale during my workdays, but since I moved away from the hood a few years ago I haven't spent much time there in the evening.

I forgot how lively things get when the weather heats up.

While across the harbour, Vancouver chafes in the sackcloth of the moniker "No-fun city," here on the North Shore there are no such limitations, expectations or disappointments. By contrast, the mood here is light, the light is golden and the people are plentiful: strolling the strip, lounging at sidewalk tables, sipping coffee, licking ice cream and eating pizza.



CREDIT: NEWS photo Paul McGrath

Cook Khalid Mostafa-Zade and owner Jennifer Crawford of Raven Pizza on Lonsdale have included several pizzas on the menu that pay homage to Jan's Classic Pizza, the previous tenant of the Central Lonsdale pizza shop.

It was for the latter that I found myself cruising Lonsdale on a warm Sunday evening. Deep Cove's favourite public house, The Raven, recently began dishing up its famous pies from the former mid-Lonsdale home of Jan's Classic Pizza.

The cosy little outpost, complete with wood floors and weathered barstools that probably spent their early years pulled up to the wood in the Cove, was buzzing during my visit. There were several cooks in the kitchen (and they can be easily observed while they work, thanks to the open-plan layout), and a small horde of customers ordering, waiting and digging into their slices.

Those who were devastated by Jan Dallin's retirement will be happy to know that new owner Jennifer Crawford was thinking of them when she created the menu for Raven Pizza on Lonsdale. There are four selections under the header Jan's Classic Gallery, and all are on Jan's original thin crust: the House Special, the Favourite Classic, Hawaiian Classic and Greek.

Otherwise, this menu will have a familiar ring to it for those living east of the Seymour River (or for those of us who just like to hang out at The Raven).

There's the famous Crimson Tide (also a burger at the pub), with pesto-marinated chicken, garlic, onions, roasted red peppers, pesto and feta; the Raven Special, topped by ham, pepperoni, salami, onions, green peppers, mushrooms and black olives; and the California Tiger Prawn, with back bacon, prawns, green onion, layered on black bean mayonnaise and cilantro. All can be made on either a regular or thin crust.

Other items available for delivery also come straight off the pub menu: flat breads

rubbed with olive oil or pesto and layered with fixings that include spicy sausage and roasted red peppers or prosciutto and goat cheese; crunchy salads and sweet desserts.

As for me, I was headed to a friend's house for a gathering of my highschool mates, and since the invitation said "bring something," I figured pizza would fill the bill nicely. The seven of us made short work of the half-and-half pie I slapped down on the table, still in its box. The Classic Vegetarian slices were composed of a lusty swipe of The Raven's slow-simmered sauce, thick wedges of tangy artichoke hearts, sundried tomatoes, onions, mushrooms, half rounds of zucchini and mozzarella, all on a dense, golden crust, just crispy at the edges.

The same crust and sauce made the Prosciutto pizza, as did the cured ham, salty and thick-sliced; plus sundried tomatoes, green olives, artichoke hearts and sweet, roasted cloves of gleaming garlic peeking out from under a layer of parmesan cheese.

The second pie was not for the faint of heart, or timid of tastebud. It was strong, salty and garlicky . . . and not all of the gang loved it.

But I did.

It just goes to show how pizza (and food in general) is such a subjective love. "I would have preferred a thin crust," was one comment. "Too salty," "Not salty enough" and "Not for me," were others.

As for me, I have struggled to find many pizzas that I like, not just on the North Shore but in a further-reaching search. I want a pizza made from scratch using real and fresh ingredients. I usually like a pan crust better than one that is very thin and crispy. I want sauce that tastes of tomatoes rather than too many herbs and spices, and I prefer a generous helping of real cheese.

The Raven's pizza meets all of the qualifications in my want ad. The sauce and yeast-raised crusts are homemade, cheeses are fresh-grated, meats are cured locally and it all gets fired in a good, hot pizza oven. Best of all, when I took leftovers home they got high marks there too. I'll be ordering it again soon. The cost for two medium pizzas was \$39.90.

Raven Pizza on Lonsdale is located at 1750 Lonsdale Ave., North Vancouver. For information or to order, visit ravenpizzalonsdale.com, or call 604-987-4441. It's open daily, 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Monday to Saturday, and 4-10 p.m. on Sunday.

North Shore News dining reviews are conducted anonymously.

© North Shore News 2008

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2008 CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#) All rights reserved.
CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#) All rights reserved.