

ISSUE 01 | MAY 2022

Restaurant Gems of Pittsburgh - Insider's Guide Membership

Helping every day Pittsburgher's find hidden restaurant gems that won't break the bank!

CREATED BY
ERIC FONTANA

THEME OF THE
MONTH: PIZZA



Table of Contents

Page 3

INTRODUCTION

Owner and founder, Eric Fontana, describes his passion for food.

Page 4-7

THEME OF THE MONTH

Each month will feature a different cuisine!

Page 9-10

GROCERY GUIDE

Money-saving tips to get your favorite groceries for less

Page 11-12

KITCHEN TIP OF THE MONTH

Find out what's going on in Eric's kitchen for the month!

Page 13

SNEAK PEEK INTO THE MIND OF A FOOD CRITIC

Learn how eric views restaurant criteria to select the best restaurants in your area!

Page 14-16

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Get a behind-the-scenes look at eric's favorite recipes





MEET ERIC!

I'm a Pittsburgh-born food lover here to help you find hidden restaurant gems and food that won't break the bank!

My love of food started when I was young. I recall loving to eat (my favorite food was chicken wings) and savoring my mom's homemade spaghetti and sauce. I ate so much that I'm not sure how my parents fed me!

I also deeply enjoyed going out to eat. I appreciated taking in every aspect of the ambiance in different restaurants and perusing the menus well before I even went to the restaurant. My love of food and restaurant hopping birthed my first two books and this membership.

If you love going out to eat, but don't want to spend an arm and a leg, this membership will help you navigate the BEST restaurants in your area without breaking the bank.



Theme of the Month!

PIZZA THAT WILL WOW YOUR TASTEBUDS!

“

Our dishes are made from fresh and organic ingredients!

”



I have tried a ton of pizza places in the Pittsburgh area. In my opinion, here are the best in each geographical region of the Steel City!

West – Police Station Pizza (Ambridge, PA)

The quality of the ingredients is top notch. Everything is homemade and the ingredients are top quality. The crust is thick and lighter and crispier than most, which creates a solid base. The sauce is traditional and flavorful.

Anytime I've been to Police Station, it's packed. People know good food. They get you in and out quickly and the way you order is unique. They ask, "How many? Toppings?" and even in a crowded room, they'll remember which pizza you ordered.

You can also order pizza unbaked and cook it yourself at home. The amount of toppings you get when you order unbaked is more than generous. They provide tons of un-melted cheese to add at home to mimic the feeling of do-it-yourself pizza.



Theme of the Month!

PIZZA THAT WILL WOW YOUR TASTEBUDS!

East – Rockaway Pizza (White Oak, PA)-

Rockaway Pizzeria uses the base model of Queens, New York style pizza. The crust is thin, the ingredients and toppings are top of the line, and it is greasy. Remember, greasiness generated from the finest meats and cheeses that are non-processed adds a ton of flavor without leaving you feeling heavy. Rockaway uses a special fermented dough recipe that takes days before transforming into its final product. The sauce has generous portions garlic, onion, crushed red pepper, and other ingredients which is slowed cooked to perfection. The cheese is imported from Italy.

All pizzas are 18" 8 cut-pies. You can also order by the slice at certain times which is hard to come by in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area. Rockaway has your standard toppings such as pepperoni and sausage but takes it up a notch with some of these notables. Toppings that you do not typically see which Rockaway has are hot soppressata and genovetta, San Marzano tomatoes, breaded eggplant, prosciutto, and hot cherry peppers.

You have to try this place, you will be blown away by the selection, toppings, and freshness of the ingredients!



Theme of the Month!

PIZZA THAT WILL WOW
YOUR TASTEBUDS!

East - Ginny's Neighborhood Pizza Joint (Murrysville, PA) -

It is one thing to say you use the best ingredients, it is another to use the best that money can buy. At first glance of the pizza, you can tell that each ingredient was deliberately chosen and bursting with flavor. The Meatatarian (captioned), takes a meat lovers pizza to a whole new level. The crust is thick, airy, buttery, yet extremely light. What made it so unique and juicy was the beautiful use of ricotta cheese. The combination of meats is pure genius, with a mixture of Pepperoni, Pinched Hot Sausage, Meatball, Prosciutto, Bacon, and a blend of high-end cheeses. They have a variety of other specialty pizzas, and traditional pies as well.



Theme of the Month!

PIZZA THAT WILL WOW YOUR TASTEBUDS!

South – A Slice of New York (Manor, PA) - To the best of my knowledge in the Pittsburgh metro area, New York Style Pizza can be somewhat difficult to find, but not anymore. New York City native, Sean Jefairjian, has brought a culmination of award-winning recipes to the Steel City. Let me show you why this is a must try pizza if you are anywhere near the Allegheny/Westmoreland County area.

First things first, the pizza crust is homemade, 18" in diameter, and cut into 8 large slices. Ask any New Yorker, New York pizza slices are sizable and eye catching. The sauce is not what you may expect in that it is extremely simple. The pizza sauce is simply hand crushed San Marzano tomatoes, basil, and salted to taste. How many times have you had sauce that overpowers the pizza? This sauce is delicious, flavorful, yet light enough to not overtake your taste buds.

A lot of places in Pittsburgh use Provolone cheese. A Slice of New York takes a page right from the big apple by using Whole Milk Mozzarella Cheese. Finally, the x-factor is the pizza is removed from the oven just at the right time for the cheese to produce a light layer of butterfat which gives the pizza unbelievable flavor. Top each piece with a piece of fresh basil, choose your favorite toppings, and you will enjoy authentic, New York Pizza unlike anywhere in the Steel City.

A top-down view of a bowl filled with a rich, orange-red sauce, likely a curry or stew. The dish contains chunks of meat, potatoes, and possibly tofu. A small green herb garnish is visible in the center. The bowl is set against a dark background with some dried leaves and seeds scattered around. The entire image has a warm, orange-red color overlay.

“
Eating out
doesn't have to
be expensive to
be delicious!”

ERIC FONTANA

Grocery Guide

MONEY-SAVING TIPS TO
REDUCE YOUR
GROCERY BILLS
WITHOUT SACRIFICING
QUALITY



Your Money-Saving Shopping List

- Making a grocery list. Grocery stores specifically market and set up stores in ways that are designed to stimulate your taste buds. Knowing what you need and not deviating much from your grocery list will save you from buying this you do not necessarily need.
- Buy store brands – Did you know that a lot of the store brands are the same product with a different label slapped on it? For instance, the Giant Eagle brand products are the same product without the brand name on it. Unless having a name brand on the product is important to you, by the store brand, you will pay considerably less!
- Don't go to the store hungry, you are more inclined to buy items that you wouldn't buy if you had already eaten.
- Don't just shop at eye level, check all the shelves! Grocery stores put what they want you to see and the most convenient places, aka the middle shelf. Make sure you check bottom and top shelves and don't be afraid to dig around trying to find what you want!
- Don't go overboard with fuel perks. Giant Eagle for instance, I shop their frequently, but I don't buy everything there. Giant Eagle has quality meats and other items that you can't get anywhere else. But those items and go elsewhere for items that you can find cheaper elsewhere. The fuel perks are nice and definitely helpful, however, a lot of the items are priced higher to take into the account those fuel perks.

Grocery Guide

MONEY-SAVING TIPS TO
REDUCE YOUR
GROCERY BILLS
WITHOUT SACRIFICING
QUALITY



Your Money-Saving Shopping List

BONUS - Items you can get at Dollar Tree

-**Spices** - \$1.25 each, as opposed to paying \$2.00-\$4.00 for basic spices such as salt, pepper, onion powder, and garlic powder, etc.

-**Frank's Red-Hot Sauce** - \$1.25 for 5 ounce bottle as opposed to paying around \$2.00 anywhere else.

-**Foil Disposable Serving Pans (Large)** - \$1.25 each You would have to buy them in bulk most places to get them individually at this price.

Kitchen Tip of the Month

A BEHIND-THE-SCENES
LOOK AT WHAT'S
COOKING IN ERIC'S
KITCHEN



Kitchen Staples + Must-Have's

Tip #1. Use a vast amount of spices. I am big proponent of keeping a vast repertoire of seasonings/spices. Aside from having basic spices like salt and pepper, you should always have garlic powder, onion powder, paprika, and cayenne pepper that can add heat and flavor to your dishes.

Tip #2. Kosher Salt is your friend – I have learned that most of the big time chefs use Kosher Salt to season their food. They literally salt everything from meats to tomatoes and onions, to breads. It is course in texture and penetrates food better than table salt. It is also great to use as a dry brine to tenderize meat.

For example, when I make steak, I coat the whole steak with Kosher salt for at least an hour to tenderize the meat, then rinse it off before grilling.

Tip #3. A basic Crockpot is a necessity. Slow cooking meats (pork, beef, lamb, chicken) for longer periods of time in a Crockpot will result in a delicious, tender final product.

Kitchen Tip of the Month

A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT WHAT'S COOKING
IN ERIC'S KITCHEN



Kitchen Staples + Must-Have's

EGGS COOKED IN BACON GREASE WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE – You may or may not know about this delicious breakfast item. Pan fry your bacon as you would normally do. Leave the bacon grease in the pan, do not discard. Fry your eggs in the bacon grease and pat dry with a paper towel. You will not need salt. Simply delicious!

SMOKED PAPRIKA – This spice can be a little pricy, but it adds another level of depth and flavor to your food. It works great on chicken, steak, and many other foods.

Where to get it – You can get this spice at Trader Joes for around \$2.50. If there is not a Trader Joes around you, it can be purchased at Wal Mart for around \$4.00. If you purchase elsewhere chances are you are going to pay around \$6.00 to \$10.00 for this spice. Add this spice to your arsenal!

This will take your food to another level of flavor. I use it on steak, chicken, pork, etc. I used it often, I recommend you use it too!

Sneak Peek into the Mind of A Food Critic

LEARN HOW ERIC VIEWS
RESTAURANT CRITERIA TO
SELECT THE BEST
RESTAURANTS IN YOUR
AREA!



To find a hidden gem, you need to look beyond reviews/ratings on Google. Here are two tips you can use to find the best hidden gems in your area.

Tip #1. Look at the food pictures/portions and menu. Check to see if the restaurant skimp on portions. Do you see a lot of empty space on the plate or a lot of food?

Take a look at the menu and see if you have to add on to the dish or if it's included all together. Ex: An entree salad is \$13 but then you add protein for an up-charge.

Another example could be to see if sides are included. Does the entree come with anything? Bigger portions often allow you to have leftovers for the next day and get the most bang for your buck.

Tip #2. Does the restaurant specialize in something? For example, does the website have a special section on the item? Ex: Best fish sandwich, best wings, best burger, etc. You can also see if there are articles about the special.

Recipe of the Month

GET A BEHIND-THE-SCENES
LOOK AT ERIC'S FAVORITE
RECIPES



CROCKPOT PORKBUTT/PORK SHOULDER –

This will be a fan favorite at a family get together or event and it is super easy to make!

Ingredient List -

Pork Butt or Pork Shoulder from your local grocery store
Bulb of Garlic
Brown sugar
Lemon juice

For the rub:

2 tablespoons of Kosher salt
1 tablespoon of paprika
1 tablespoon of garlic powder
1 tablespoon of onion powder
1 tablespoon of black pepper
A pinch of Cayenne pepper

Step 1. Cut a whole bulb of garlic, cut cloves in half, poke holes all over the meat and stuff the garlic into the pork.

Step 2. Combine ingredient for rub and mix thoroughly. Rub generously on all areas of meat. Add additional tablespoon of brown sugar directly on top of pork. Add a small amount (2 TBSP) lemon or orange juice to the crockpot. *The acidity tenderizes the meat.*

Recipe of the Month

GET A BEHIND-THE-SCENES
LOOK AT ERIC'S FAVORITE
RECIPES



CROCKPOT PORKBUTT/PORK SHOULDER –

Step 3. Using a meat injector (you can get one at dollar tree), inject any type of Apple Juice directly into meat in multiple locations. This will keep meat hydrated.

Step 4. Place meat in crockpot and cook on low for 10 to 12 hours.

The meat will pull right apart and will be one of the most tender pieces of meat you have ever eaten.

You can put it on nachos, make sandwiches or wraps from it, or pair it with rice and a vegetable.

Trust me, your family will love it!

Recommendation/Pro tip – Do not add barbecue sauce after you pull it!

This will destroy most of the flavor that you have created over an extended cooking period and all you will taste is barbecue sauce and pork and it will get soggy. If you want to add barbecue sauce, add it separately to the dish after you plated it or to your sandwich separately.

Recipe of the Month

GET A BEHIND-THE-SCENES
LOOK AT ERIC'S FAVORITE
RECIPES



CROCKPOT PORKBUTT/PORK SHOULDER –

Step 3. Using a meat injector (you can get one at dollar tree), inject any type of Apple Juice directly into meat in multiple locations. This will keep meat hydrated.

Step 4. Place meat in crockpot and cook on low for 10 to 12 hours.

The meat will pull right apart and will be one of the most tender pieces of meat you have ever eaten.

You can put it on nachos, make sandwiches or wraps from it, or pair it with rice and a vegetable.

Trust me, your family will love it!

Recommendation/Pro tip – Do not add barbecue sauce after you pull it!

This will destroy most of the flavor that you have created over an extended cooking period and all you will taste is barbecue sauce and pork and it will get soggy. If you want to add barbecue sauce, add it separately to the dish after you plated it or to your sandwich separately.



LET'S STAY
CONNECTED!



- Follow me on Instagram
@restaurantgemsofpittsburgh



- Stay connected on my Facebook Page -
Restaurant Gems of Pittsburgh!



- Visit my website for more tips and restaurant
reviews!