

Nebraska Geographic

with *ALAN J. BARTELS*

100ThingsSandhills@gmail.com



Nov. 13, 2024

Pizza Time

Nebraska's important culinary contributions include the invention of the Reuben sandwich and legendary Dorothy Lynch Homestyle Dressing. The Tin Roof Sundae, frozen TV dinners, and even Kool-Aid were also invented here. Ranch dressing was not invented in Nebraska, but it was invented by a Nebraskan. So were Eskimo Pie ice cream treats and Raisin Bran breakfast cereal. It should come as no surprise to the residents of Nebraska – the Beef State – that the beef cut known worldwide as the Flat Iron Steak was developed at the University of Nebraska. In addition to being the birthplace of the Runza and Amigos fast food chains, Cornhusker State residents can also claim Godfather's Pizza, and Valentin's restaurants as having started out in Nebraska.

That reminds me, great pizza is not hard to find in Nebraska communities. Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia are famous for their unique styles of pizza craftsmanship. But I'd put these Nebraska pizza places up against all comers. Enjoy.

Pizza Palace

When Calamus Reservoir was being built near Burwell in the early 1980s, the workmen overflowed the town's eateries at mealtime. Nary a seat was left for locals. Two Burwell teachers polled their students: What type of restaurant did the town need? The student body voted for a pizza place, and Pizza Palace soon was born.

Andrea Seidel worked at Pizza Palace during high school. She later bought the business. Her Calamus Reuben Pizza honors the lake so important to the region's economy, and the iconic Reuben sandwich invented 200 miles away in Omaha. A favorite of visitors—with mayo, ketchup, sweet pickle relish, and sauerkraut—this pizza has a tangy twang. Locals like their kraut, too. The popular Max Wilson Special is named for the Burwell man who always orders sauerkraut and hamburger on his pizza. This Sandhills pizzeria is upper-crust.
204 Grand Ave., Burwell.

Lazy Horse Brewing & Winery

I'd never spent much time in Ohio until this place opened up in 2015. Actually, I still haven't, Lazy Horse is 3 miles south of the Fillmore County village so named as a compromise between early settlers from Iowa and Ohio who wanted to name the fledgling community after their home states.

Combination winery/breweries are a rarity in Nebraska. Even more rare is a winery/brewery with a wood-fired pizza oven dominating their tasting room. The flames licking up in the oven add a unique ambiance to the dining area. So does the wraparound porch with scenic views of surrounding pastures and a curious herd of horses.

The Sausage and Kraut, and Ranch & Dill Pickle pizzas are my favorites at Lazy Horse. The Smores are gourmet and delectable. So are the beers. I'll take the Reckless IPA, please.

Jim Stutzman, who owns Lazy Horse with his wife, Julie, is a Navy veteran and one of the most patriotic people I know. I salute his service to our country and the Stutzmans' dedication to making tasty pizzas and stellar brews (and wines) with which to wash it all down. 211 Rd. 20, Ohio.

Here's a quick rundown of some other quality pizza joints:

Yia Yia's Pizza and Beer

This Lincoln restaurant's O Street location is a landmark. They also have a location at 70th and Van Dorn. Yia Yia's extra-large pizza pies are 20 inchers. There are 160 varieties of bottled craft beer available at Yia Yia's as well as 25 other beers on tap. In addition to pizzas, the menu includes loaded potatoes, loaded breads, cocktails, and desserts.

Arthur's Pizza

This Scottsbluff restaurant was founded just a few years ago in 2021, but it has a long history. It began as a Godfather's Pizza franchise in 1976. When he let the franchise agreement expire, owner David Thiele kept the place going and named it after his father. The food is much the same as what customers have long enjoyed, just with new names. For example, the previously named Combo is now called the Deluxe. I recommend the Sauerkraut Deluxe.

Orsi' Italian Bakery & Pizzeria

This Omaha staple has been doing its thing since 1919! Yes, you read that right, more than a century in business in the Big O. It started when World War I veteran Alfonso Orsi went into business for himself in Omaha's Little Italy neighborhood. Orsi's Italian twist bread is legendary and has been almost since day one. Orsi's Sicilian style pizzas are often rated as the best pizzas in all of Nebraska. Ever heard of a Goudarooni? It's basically a giant calzone. The last one I ordered (packed with ground beef and mozzarella cheese) measured almost 15 inches long. The buttery crust is to die for – but if I did – I wouldn't get any more pizza!

Safe Travels – and watch for deer!