

## Pie-eyed

*For many Rochesterians,  
the best pizza in town  
is on State Street.*

The Pizza Stop is known for three things: authentic, New York-style pizza; long lunch lines; and their order-smart-order-fast-and-don't-be-a-jerk flow.

Jim Staffieri, owner of the Pizza Stop, is a transplant with an accent to prove it. Staffieri was born in Brooklyn, grew up on Long Island, and worked in his dad's Brooklyn-style pizzeria for years. After five years as an art director in Manhattan, Staffieri's brother, Joe, (who was living in Rochester) called and asked Staffieri if he wanted to open a

pizza shop with him in Rochester. That was 1986. The brothers opened the Pizza Stop in the same location it is today, 123 State St., and started making pizza the only way they knew how—New York-style: a thin crust; a distinctive New York-style dough recipe; a homemade, uncooked sauce; killer cheese; and a few more trade secrets Staffieri wouldn't divulge.

"When we came up here, the thought was not to compromise and make a Rochester pizza. We did what we knew," Staffieri says. "At the time, we were the only place in Rochester doing New York-style," he continues. "Now there are a lot of places

claiming to do New York, but it's a fine line. Everybody has their own thought about what a pizza should be."

Joe stayed in the business for a year and a half; Staffieri has been solo at the helm ever since.

At the Pizza Stop, it's not just the pizza that's authentic New York-style. It's the whole place: The stuff hanging on the walls and littering the counters. The narrow, shotgun layout. The monster-sized pizza ovens in the front window, pumping pizza aroma out into the street. Fortunately for those on the other side of the counter, the Pizza Stop guys aren't nearly as abrupt

as New York City pizza guys can be. But they're not exactly a typical suburban pizza franchise either.

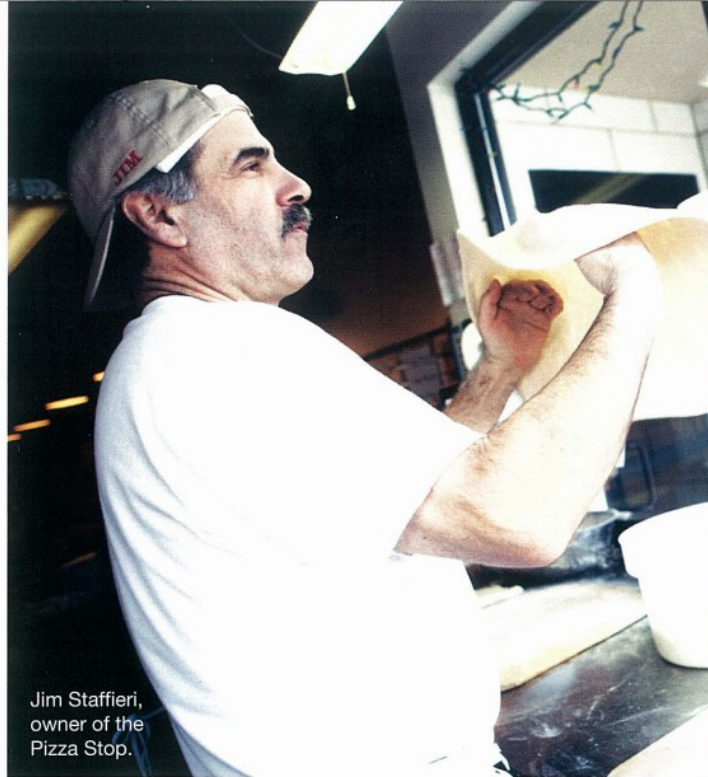
"We've been referred to as the Pizza Nazis from time to time," Staffieri says. "We're not rude. If you come in and you're respectful, you'll be treated with respect. But if you don't respect me, I'm not going to kiss your ass." There's a picture of Seinfeld's Soup Nazi on the wall in case you forget whom you're dealing with, and several signs essentially intimating that you're a tool if you try to order while you're on your cell phone.

In order to keep things interesting and taste buds intrigued, Staffieri plays around with topping combinations. "We started doing things differently from way back, and we're still doing things differently," Staffieri says. In addition to pizza classics such as cheese and pepperoni, the Pizza Stop menu will feature, on any given day, pulled-pork pizza (with homemade pork, natch); chicken wing pizza; and spinach, tomato, and ricotta (which he pronounces "ruh-GOAT"). During an average lunch rush, the Pizza Stop offers 15 different pie varieties and pumps out a total of 70 pies, give or take.

The Pizza Stop's pizza has garnered some serious attention over the years. In fact, Travel Channel's "Man v. Food" recently recommended the Pizza Stop as a must-eat. The show's host, Adam Richman, was born and raised in Brooklyn, so he obviously knows a good New York-style slice when he (folds and) eats it.

All this reverence means finding a seat at lunchtime can be tough. Staffieri's looking to expand his seating area into the storefront next door—maybe even stay open later, open up on Saturdays, and offer beer. But don't be worried that an expansion will tarnish any of the Pizza Stop's, well, tarnish. "There'll be no granite anywhere, I'll tell you that," Staffieri says.

—Julie Garland Clementi



Jim Staffieri, owner of the Pizza Stop.



*We will not take  
Your order  
If you are talking on  
Your "phone" please  
Remove it from your  
Head and talk to us  
Thank You  
Management*



The guys at 123 State Street.