

THE NEW YORK OBSERVER

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NEW YORK, MARCH 20, 1995

Small Indulgences for the Windblown Month of March

By Ed Levine

I can't stand the month of March. It's cold, it's hot, I should've worn a sweater, I wish I could take this sweater off. So I get through the month by indulging myself—

New York Eats normally wouldn't allow myself to eat. Of course,

in order to know precisely what items will satisfy in March, I have to taste them in February. I can't afford a month of indulging in foods that aren't worth the calories.

My first recommended March indulgence is Lombardi's Pizza on Spring Street. It's the nation's oldest pizzeria, having opened its doors in 1897. Genaro Lombardi, the grandson of the founder, closed the original Lombardi's in 1987. Eight years later, Genaro has teamed with noted pizza maker and scholar Andrew Bellucci (late of the Three of Cups in the East Village) to reopen. How do I love thee, Lombardi's? Let me count the ways: The coal-fired brick oven imparts an incredible taste to the crunchiness but still pliant crust. The flavorful but not too sweet sauce is made using imported tomatoes from San Marzano in Italy. The creamy mozzarella is made in Brooklyn by Aiello Brothers. The lean sausage is from Esposito's on Ninth Avenue. Being the pizzaiologist that he is, Mr. Bellucci knew that his pizza menu

at Lombardi's would be complete only if he could duplicate the fresh clam pie made at

His clam pie is a paradigm, prepared with fresh New Zealand littleneck clams (they

use littlenecks at Pepe's, too), olive oil, fresh garlic and parsley, and just a touch of grated Romano cheese. It's simultaneously light and hearty, a perfect antidote to a chilly March day.



James Hamilton

Andrew Bellucci at Lombardi's coal-burning pizza oven.

Frank Pepe's, the national pizza shrine in New Haven. He has succeeded admirably.