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\$25 and Under | Eric Asimov

LOMBARDI'S, 32 Spring Street, near Mott Street, SoHo, (212) 941-7994; 11:30 A.M. to 11 P.M. Mondays through Thursdays, until midnight Fridays and Saturdays, until 10 P.M. Sundays; cash only; one step up to dining room, very narrow bathroom.

Bloodlines are important in the pizza business. Just ask all those guys named Ray who claim to be the first, the original, the genuine. Or ask the owners of Patsy's and Lombardi's, two of New York's newest and best pizzerias.

Patsy's, it turns out, is owned by two Nicks and a Michael, but no Patsy. Lombardi's is owned by a Bellucci, but no Lombardi. So why the names? History. The original Lombardi's was opened on Spring Street in 1905 by Gennaro Lombardi, who is often credited with introducing pizza to New York City. The original Patsy's opened in East Harlem in 1932 and is still in business, though with different owners. These new incarnations claim the legacies of their pie-baking ancestors, and each produces pizzas worthy of introducing their names to a new generation.

Andrew Bellucci, the owner of Lombardi's, has made pies at Two Boots and Three of Cups, and wanted to open his own place. He sought out Gennaro Lombardi's grandson and namesake, who still owned the building at 53 Spring Street that housed the old Lombardi's.

Just down the block Mr. Bellucci found an old bakery with a coal oven. The bakery had been closed for 21 years, but the oven was still there, crucial since city environmental law permits existing coal ovens to be used but does not permit new ones to be installed. He was in business.

His small, handsome aisle of a restaurant has a floor of tiny white tiles, red-and-white tablecloths

and booths for about 45 people. Photos of the original Lombardi's adorn the brick-and-stucco walls.

And the pizza? The glory is the crust: light, thin, crisp yet elastic, blackened and blistered and full of the smoky flavor that comes from the coal oven. The recipe, provided by the younger Mr. Lombardi, seems better adapted to medium-size pizzas with six slices (\$10.50), which are crisp throughout, than to the large eight-slice pizzas (\$12.50), which tend to be a little soft in the center. The mozzarella is fresh and hand cut, the tomato sauce is decent, and toppings like roasted peppers (\$2) and thin slices of dry Italian sausage (\$3) are fine. A Lombardi's specialty is clam pie (\$16, \$20), a delicious combination of fresh-shucked clams, olive oil, garlic and oregano, with just a hint of Parmesan, on a crisp crust. But the clam pie must be eaten immediately when still hot. It is