

ZAGAT

5 Must-Try Dishes at BIGA

By Darlene Horn | January 20, 2016



BIGA, Downtown's newest eatery, isn't defined by its name alone. Named after an Italian fermentation process that's the foundation for all its housemade pizza and breads, the restaurant aims to impress with a level of execution often associated with much fancier restaurants. That's the appeal owner and chef Tae Dickey has in mind: combining casual eating with artisanal ingredients, either made in-house or sourced locally from surrounding farms and vendors.

Located on the bottom floor of Samuel Fox Lofts building on the corner of Sixth and Broadway, BIGA bustles with energy thanks to an open kitchen where diners can catch a view of the butcher station and planters of fresh herbs surrounding two 500-pound wood-burning ovens. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, the restaurant serves made-to-order Neapolitan-style

pizzas, salads and sandwiches all priced around \$10. You'll need to order from the counter and try to score an open table, but that's part of the fun at this restaurant that's already becoming a big deal around lunchtime. Since opening in early January, it's quickly becoming the go-to place for Downtown employees who want quality meals that don't break the budget. Here are five must-try dishes to order off of the lunch menu.

950 Sixth Ave.; 619-794-0444



Pizzas make a big splash during the lunch rush. With crust made from a 200-year-old mother dough starter, the pizzas come topped with artisanal meats and housemade cheeses. Dickey suggests going for the restaurant's pizza frita (starts at \$8), a creation you'll find only in Northern Italy. Like other pizzas, it starts with thin dough topped with your choice of ingredients. Unlike other pizzas, a second crust is added, and the kitchen crimps the pizza frita much like a pie. The pizza is then slid into hot oil and fried until golden. Once cooked, the pizza frita is cut in half and served in paper wrappers.



Whether because it's cold outside or because you're looking for a bit of homey comfort, try the rustic Tuscan ribollita (\$5). This housemade vegetable soup is thickened with house bread, making it hearty enough to stand alone. Ingredients change based on the season.



Each of the six sandwiches (\$9 each) feature the shop's thin, chewy bread that highlights the fillings. You could go classic with the prosciutto, but why not give the chicken skin sandwich a try? Richly seasoned, crisp skin complements the slices of scamorza cheese, sliced tomatoes, pickled onion, purple basil, arugula and lemon aioli spread. All come with your choice of dipping sauce (sundried tapenade, pesto aioli, farmer's tomato sauce or bagna cauda) and a side of pickled veggies.



The salads (\$9 each) are just as well thought out as the sandwiches, with choices ranging from a tuna conserva to a cavolo nero. Dickey recommends trying the chicory salad, a dish featuring a warm egg as a creamy ingredient mixed with crisp bacon and herb dressing.



Mozzarella (\$7–\$8) isn't always on the lunch menu, but if it's available, go for the burrata with truffle cream and pea tendrils. Housemade and served warm, the cheese is a rich accompaniment that goes well as a side to the restaurant's fresh focaccia.