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[editorial]



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Metropolitan Neapolitan

Varuni Napoli serves up a taste of Naples in Morningside.

By Alison Abbey Photography by Sara Hanna



Forget what you know about pizza joints and try a slice of **Varuni Napoli**, Morningside's new hot spot that's shaking up ATL's pie game.

Naples native maestro pizzaiolo Luca Varuni grew up in a family of chefs who instilled in him a strong passion for Neapolitan cuisine. After working in Italian kitchens for many years and training under renowned maestro pizzaiolo Enzo Coccia, he came to America, eventually landing in Atlanta. After a stint at Antico Pizza, Varuni set to work cultivating and crafting the vision for what would become this rising star resto.

Enter architect and developer (and fellow Italian expat) Giancarlo Pirrone. With an impressive CV of international design and business experience,

his global view and aesthetic eye were key in making Varuni's vision a reality.

Every detail of the manufacturing warehouse-turned-bistro has been thought out and created with *la dolce vita* in mind, thanks to Glazer Design & Construction, which executed the resto's build-out. Communal tables, as well as more intimate lounge-style seating, allow diners to interact with friends and neighbors alike while watching a veritable culinary theater, as their meals are custom-made in the enormous open kitchen. Each step of the process—from the making and rising of the dough to the plating of the pie—can be clocked. (For a front-row seat, slide up to the pizza bar and get even closer to the action, where Varuni's team is crisping pies to perfection with authentic Neapolitan ovens.) And if you're in it for the grub, but can't stay for



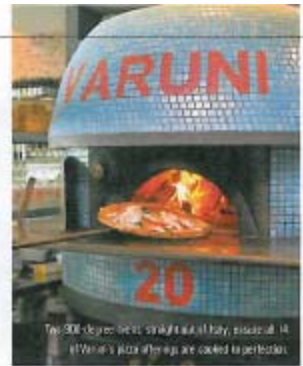
the show, a pickup window just off Monroe allows diners to order ahead and take their treats home.

True to his master pizzamaking background, Varuni's pies are all to die for. Test new culinary waters with artisan pizza ops like the Mamma—a mouthwatering combination of cherry Vesuvian tomatoes, smoked Buffalo mozzarella, fresh arugula and prosciutto di Parma—or go for a tried and true classic like the margherita. Both are divine.

Venture beyond the Varuni pizzas and try the antipasto for two: prosciutto di Parma, Nduja (a spicy pork sausage you have to taste to believe), sopresata, spicy salami, lardo, taleggio cheese, truffle oil and mixed olives. Or for a dish that will change your life—and the way you look at pies—order up Varuni Napoli's famed Reginella: A fried calzone stuffed



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with *fior di latte* mozzarella, buffalo ricotta, Pecorino romano, cobarino tomatoes, salami, cicoli, basil, extra-virgin olive oil and black pepper. The light-as-air fried outer shell defies the laws of culinary physics and the combination of flavors is out-of-this-world delicious. Cap the night with a well-priced glass of vino (or beer) and one of Varuni's traditional Neapolitan desserts (on display in a mouthwatering glass case, perfectly positioned next to the bar). *Buon appetito!*



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