

The Dish List: Blaze Pizza

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Now in college, our appetite for this oven-baked goodie hasn't waned, though we look for ways to get the most scrumptious pizza possible for a handful of bucks. Here to greet us is the recently opened Blaze Pizza, the pizza equivalent of Chipotle that is located across from Berkeley Dog in UTC.

The appeal of Blaze is the concept that you can build your own personal-size (roughly eight to 10 inches in diameter), thin crust pizza with a variety of toppings that Blaze offers. Of course, Blaze isn't the first pizza restaurant in the OC to offer this distinct service — Pieology comes to mind for those who have explored Fullerton. While the two are quite similar, it's nice to have a place like Blaze so close to campus.

Blaze offers a simple and welcoming environment. There are plenty of comfortable seats available inside and outside, and it doesn't feel stuffy despite the open brick fire oven, where the pizzas are baked.

The restaurant provides eight signature pizzas to choose from, as well as a build-your-own option, each for a nice affordable price of \$6.85, which is lower than Pieology's \$7.50 pies. After you approach the pie-making station and tell the first worker what pizza you want, he/she takes a chunk of dough and flattens it with an interesting-looking contraption in the back.

From that point on, the workers assemble your pizza with the toppings you want, depending on the type of pie you choose. If you're a fan of normal cheese pizza, there's the Simple Pie for just \$5, in which a layer of mozzarella and parmesan cheeses coats over a bed of red sauce.

While it's definitely more fun to create your own pizzas, the signature ones stand well on their own. The BBQ Chkn is a good choice of pizza on a warm summer day, with a tangy BBQ sauce drizzled over a pie of chicken, onion, red onion, pepperoncini and mozzarella and gorgonzola cheeses. Packing on some heat is the Link In, as a smattering of Italian sausage and red peppers give the pie a spicy kick.

By the time your pizza comes out of the oven (which usually takes around five minutes to bake, culminating in roughly a 10 minute wait), it looks colorful, almost too pretty to eat. This is the case with the Green Stripe and White Top signature pizzas, for which a dainty layer of arugula finishes the pies with a refreshing touch.

Blaze's policy of limiting each pizza to a three meats and cheeses combo is quite annoying, however — especially for meat aficionados. Feeling that the Meat Lover signature pizza (which offers only pepperoni and crushed meatballs) doesn't pack enough meat, such customers may be tempted to order their pizzas with all the meats available. However, they will be dismayed by the fact that they can only order up to three meats maximum with no cheese (or two meats and one cheese, and so on and so forth), and that only forking over an extra dollar will allow them to indulge their carnivore fantasies.

The unfortunate three meats and cheeses combo aside, Blaze can certainly pride itself for its pizzas. The toppings are very fresh, and the portions prove to be a satisfying meal for many.

Blaze doesn't stop at just pizzas with its menu, though. If you don't want a pizza, you can instead order three types of salad (Capriini, Caesar and antipasto) and even build your own. As Pieology sells ding dongs, Blaze offers a dessert of its own with gooey s'more pies. Unlike Pieology, Blaze sells beer and wine, which will attract those who are 21 and over. Their blood orange lemonade is uniquely tangy, though paying \$2 for fountain drink cups (you'll need one if you want the lemonade) is rather ridiculous.

If you want to fulfill your pizza cravings, Blaze Pizza is definitely a place to frequent. Their pizzas are fresh and capable of leaving you satisfyingly full, and best of all, it's affordable for the average college student with shallow pockets.