

Slice of Detroit in Vancouver

Ruse Brewing Crust Collective did its research before serving delicacy here



Ruse Brewing Crust Collective serves Detroit-style pizza at The Waterfront Vancouver.

By RACHEL PINSKY - for The Columbian

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Detroit pizza hasn't taken off in Vancouver as it has in Portland. Many locals haven't discovered the greatness of these rectangular pan pies with cheeselaced crusts that form as cubes of high-fat Wisconsin brick cheese melt down the sides of a hot metal pan.

Ruse Brewing Crust Collective opened recently with a distinct

interpretation of this Midwestern delicacy.

Shaun Kalis, co-owner, hails from the Detroit metropolitan area. Kalis, fellow owner Devin Benware, General Manager Seth Black and chef Dino Magini traveled to the Motor City to research Detroit pizza before opening their corner spot on Vancouver's waterfront. They visited classics like Buddy's, Louie's and Cloverleaf, as well as a new wave of places like Michigan and Trumbull.

Kristen Calverley and Nathan Peck of Michigan and Trumbull were particularly influential.

"They truly are masters of pizza making and have been so incredibly kind enough to mentor us through the entire process. We also put a lot of time into researching the ingredients we wanted to use," Magini said. "We really have tried to be as authentic to the style of Detroit pizza in every way possible from the ingredients in the dough to the cheese, which work together to form the unique type of crust we wanted to create."

I visited Crust Collective on a recent blustery Wednesday afternoon. Mellow classic tunes like "Late in the Evening" by Paul Simon and "Peace Train" by Cat Stevens flowed through the mostly empty space. Large glass windows offer views of the Interstate 5 Bridge and the Columbia River.

I had some trepidation because in the past, I've been burned by places claiming to serve Detroit pizza in Clark County. Previewing the menu online, I had a moment of existential dread: Why are they putting all this crap on their pizzas? My pizza freakout was unnecessary.

It turns out that Magini knows exactly what he's doing in concocting his Detroit-ish pizza creations. I tried the Quattro Cheesey pizza (\$20) as well as the Towering Trees (\$20).

Crust Collective's pizza isn't a replica of the type found in Detroit but a nice twist on the original. The crust is lighter and airier than its Motown cousin and acts as a good base for the layers of flavors placed upon it. Pizzas are baked in the traditional metal pans, and the edges are encrusted with a crisp frico of cheese, but the sauce isn't striped across the top as is traditional.

On the Quattro Cheesey, tangy tomato sauce is slathered beneath the

stretchy East Coast-blend mozzarella, which is combined with brick cheddar, Italian Parmesan and shaved pecorino. This alteration doesn't diminish a great pie.

The Towering Trees pizza yields a tornado of flavors, starting with the fresh, peppery arugula offset by tangy red vinegar blanketing chunks of earthy portobello, shiitake and crimini mushrooms and plump cloves of pungent garlic confit. The final notes of truffle salt and crunchy French fried onions create a memorable ending.

I also ordered an antipasto salad. Peppery arugula is used in place of the traditional iceberg lettuce. The cheese, finocchiona salami and prosciutto are thinly sliced. They mix well with Crust Collective's giardiniera, a pickled tangle of still-crisp veggies including ringlets of hot peppers and bits of cauliflower.

Pizza can be ordered for takeout and picked up at the front of the restaurant.

A nearby fridge is filled with cans of Ruse Brewing's beer to take home.

On my visit, takeout options included pizza-friendly brews like Lightbound, a pilsner with gentle Noble Hop notes; or Evertide, an unfiltered Helles lager. A four-pack of 16-ounce cans goes for \$14; single cans are \$4.

Detroit pizza purists who insist on a carbon copy of the Motor City pie might want to try Assembly Brewing in Portland, but the other 99.9 percent of us — those just looking for something delicious — will be satisfied by the offerings at Crust Collective.

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Dining out guide Ruse Brewing Crust Collective

Where: 650 Waterfront Way, Vancouver Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.

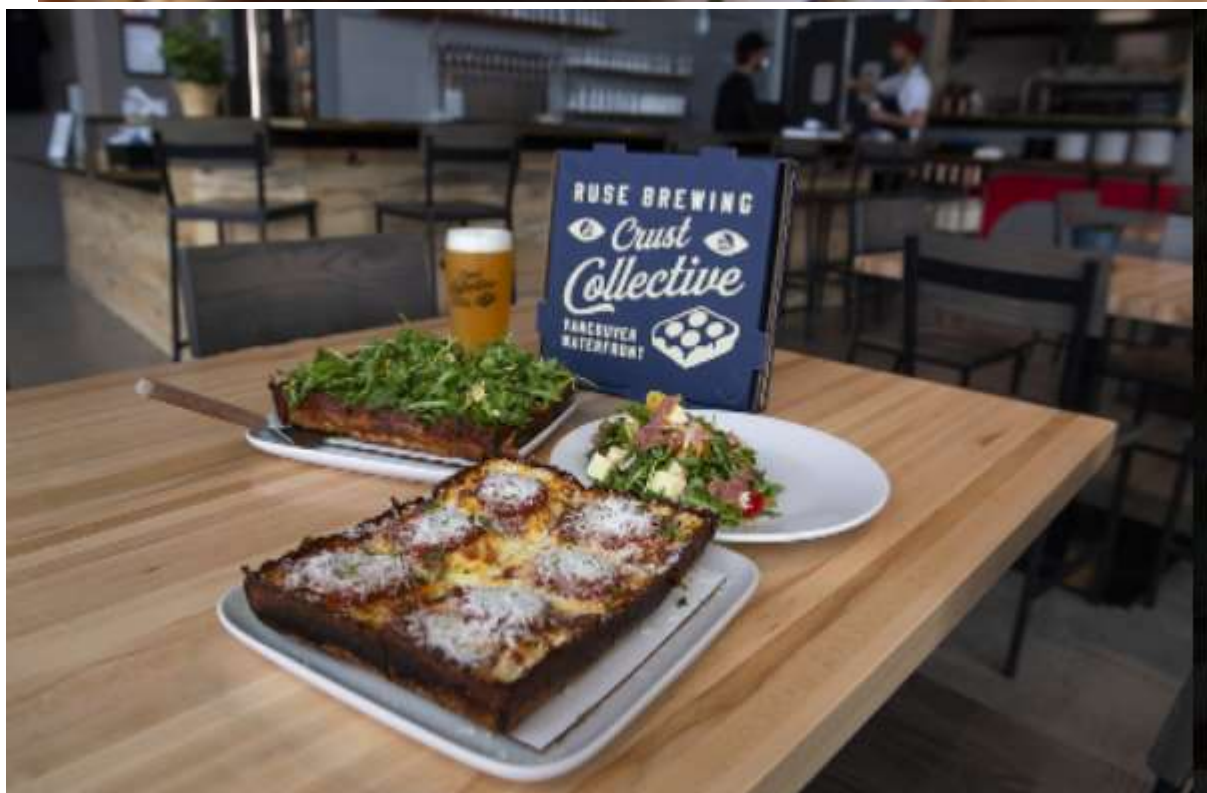
Monday through Thursday; 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday
Contact: 360-953-8394; www.crustcollective.com Health score: Ruse Brewing Crust Collective received an initial inspection with unpublished scores on May 12 and will receive a routine inspection in the near future. Zero is a perfect score; Clark County Public Health closes restaurants with a score of 100 or higher. For more information, call 360-397-8428.



Ruse Brewing Crust Collective's Towering Trees pizza is topped with mushrooms, garlic confit, French fried onion, mozzarella, arugula and truffle salt. (Amanda Cowan/The Columbian)



Co-owner Shaun Kalis pours Papyrus Iris hazy IPA at Ruse Brewing Crust Collective in Vancouver. (Amanda Cowan/The Columbian)





Brewing Crust Collective in Vancouver features Detroit-style pizza like the Quattro Cheesey pizza, foreground, and Towering Trees pizza, background, pictured with a glass of Papyrus Iris hazy IPA and antipasto salad. (Photos by Amanda Cowan/The Columbian)







Ruse Brewing Crust Collective's antipasto salad includes arugula, cabbage, chopped meat, pickled pepper, olive, cherry tomato, pickled veggies, brick cheese and red-wine vinaigrette. (Amanda Cowan/The Columbian)