

# THE TAMPA TRIBUNE

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DINING

## Delicious pie, no matter how you slice it

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TAMPA » It seems impossible at this stage of the game to come up with anything new or interesting to do with pizza. It's pizza. Even when it's bad, it's still pretty good. End of story.

Yet, Anthony's Coal Fired Pizza — which started in South Florida and now has expanded into the Tampa Bay area, Orlando and Las Vegas — seems to have caught on with a loyal crowd. The Carrollwood location we visited was packed on each of several recent visits, despite heavy rain every time.

We found the restaurant's modest menu packed with simple food made with premium ingredients, something rare in this genre of restaurant. Even the staff offered service far above what one would expect at a place where the signature dish is the same they serve at Pizza Hut. One employee escorted us under an umbrella into the restaurant, where another person waited to escort us to our table. Nice.

Clean, contemporary decor gives the restaurant a casual, upscale look. Inside, there are 20 or so wooden tables. The music is pop, and the walls are decorated with large, black-and-white prints of pop culture icons: John Lennon, Marilyn Monroe, Frank Sinatra and so forth. But the star of the restaurant is the large, coal-fired oven, which is where the magic happens.

Since the place is all about pizza, we started with the

### DINING REVIEW

#### Anthony's Coal Fired Pizza

**BOTTOM LINE:** Pizza for grown-ups, at a premium price

**WHERE:** 13020 N. Dale Mabry Highway, Tampa

**HOURS:** 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 11:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday

**CREDIT CARDS:** All major

**RESERVATIONS:** No

**CHILDREN'S MENU:** No

**ALCOHOL:** Beer and wine

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESS:** Yes

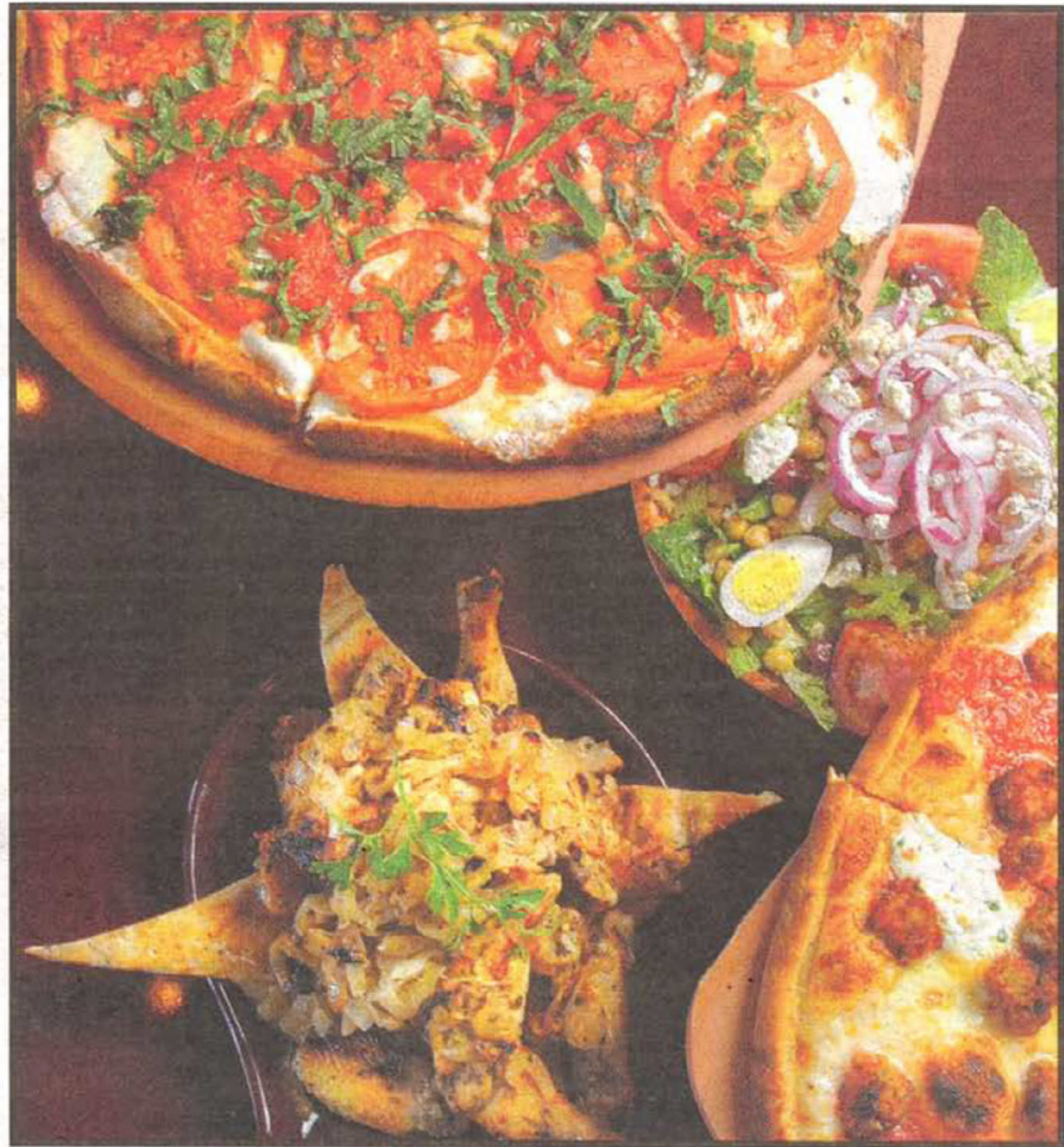
**PRICE:** \$6.25 to \$18.95

**CALL:** (813) 265-2625

chicken wings, just to be different. Like everything else, the wings were cooked in the coal-fired oven, which means they came out blackened in some spots. They came well-seasoned with Italian herbs and were served with focaccia and a mound of caramelized onions.

Success with the wings led one of our party to forgo pizza and try a large calzone, which is enough to serve two-plus people. The combination of melted mozzarella and herb-laden ricotta wrapped in a folded piece of pizza dough proved tasty, heavy. It came with a delightful marinara sauce seasoned with parsley, basil and oregano.

Drinks come only in bottles, which means no free refills or



Tribune photo by CLIFF McBRIDE

Anthony's Coal Fired Pizza offers up a variety of treats, including, clockwise from top left, a Mozzarella Sliced Tomato & Basil Pizza, Anthony's Italian Salad, Meatball & Ricotta Pizza and Roasted Chicken Wings.

that unsweetened iced tea. The bar boasts a nice selection of beer and wine.

Where pizza is concerned, it all starts with dough, and Anthony's offered a thin but substantial crust that held up well even when laden with many ingredients. However, be warned: when they say they do "pizza well done," they are advertising not only quality but the fact that, cooked in a coal-fired oven, things come out blackened. The outside of every pizza we ordered was charred.

We started with one of Anthony's simplest pizzas: — a pie smothered with fresh mozzarella, large slices of tomato (also fresh) and bits of basil. Highly recommended, if you don't

mind your pizza without sauce.

The "traditional" pizza also comes with mozzarella, Italian plum tomatoes, Romano cheese, basil and olive oil, the latter of which gives each bite a smooth finish. The pizza is fine on its own, but you can add a variety of toppings: Italian sausage, mushrooms, kalamata olives, prosciutto, long hot finger peppers, anchovies, onions, pepperoni and sweet peppers.

We tried the Paul & Young Ron pizza, which featured generous amounts of Italian sausage and mini meatballs along with ricotta cheese. We chose to top it with hot peppers that had so much bite we ended up pulling most of them off — and they still left behind a spicy

taste.

Other specialty pies include the Meatball & Ricotta, the White Pizza (ricotta, mozzarella and Romano cheese), Arugula, Frittata (pepper, onion and egg), Eggplant Marino, Broccoli Rabe & Sausage, and Philly Cheesesteak.

That basically covers almost the entire menu, other than a dessert item: New York Style cheesecake. In short, this is some of the highest quality pizza you are going to find in this area. Treat yourself, but be aware that it's going to cost you.

Tribune reviewers eat anonymously. Mary Patrick can be reached at marypatrick@fridayextra.com.