
IN THE KITCHEN

BY PAT MARLOWE

THE ONE-MAN SHOW IN WATER MILL

How to make it fun, healthy and affordable.

WATERMILL—"You've got to turn them over," said Bryan Futerman as he cleared a table of plates, silver, glasses, and two large pizza trays scraped clean of every lingering bit of cheese, sauce, crust and olive oil by eight hungry adolescent girls. He was speaking loudly enough so that nearby patrons would better understand why the owner of the restaurant might be out bussing tables on a hectic summer evening.

But he was also speaking softly, as if he were repeating a mantra he'd learned in a lifetime of working in restaurants, delis and catering halls. First, under the guidance of his mother and father in the "blood and guts of the food business" at a deli in Bayshore, Queens; later at the French Culinary Institute in New York and a handful of restaurants around the nation, including the northwest cuisine pioneer Caprial's Bistro in Portland, Oregon. As he is six or seven nights a week, Futerman was cloaked in white—a cotton t-shirt, shorts covered with an apron dusted with ash and flour and smudged with a bit of grease—and a thin layer of sweat showed through his closely cropped hair and beard. He was also smiling, because although restaurant work is some of the hardest work, this is Futerman's place.

Just a year after Foody's opened in the Water Mill shopping center, a summer weeknight saw all the tables full until around 9 p.m. Weekends are even tighter. Visits to Foody's in the dead of last winter still found a respectable number of other dining companions, and the take-out business (726-FOOD) bustles year-round.

Futerman isn't necessarily surprised by this early success. "I wanted something that was an alternative to everything else," he said, "and being different makes you stand out."

What exactly makes Foody's unique isn't just a certain laid-back ambience that makes a hostess unnecessary. There are plenty of pizzerias, Italian delis, and take-out joints with no hostess. But while the emphasis at those eateries might be getting out the food quickly and cheaply, the lack of pretension at Foody's is simply because so much focus is on the kitchen.

Consider the interior design. Amagansett architect James D'Auria conceived of the "nothing to hide" warehouse feel with shellacked plywood floors, simple farmhouse tables, and pipe fittings for railings, not just because it accommodated a shoestring budget and one-month building time, but because it resonated with the transparency of fresh, wholesome ingredients in the food. The facility came with a pizza oven, so even though Futerman didn't have pizza in mind, the oven stands proudly behind the counter and allows Futerman to brandish the pizza-making chops he gained at Nick & Toni's in East Hampton where he was sous-chef. (Futerman also shares some of what he learned about sausage and mozzarella-making when he ran Nick & Toni's pork store Villa Italiana.)



Bryan Futerman with just two of his housemade specialties, roast beef and mozzarella.

Few places that serve pizza also offer three to four seasonal vegetables each night, an array of fresh seafood, and salads decorated with greens and cheese (including mozzarella made daily) that are only vaguely relat-

ed to iceberg lettuce and run-of-the-mill Gorgonzola. Even fewer places that serve pizza also make their own sausage, and smoke and slow-roast their own brisket and ribs. (“It’s not just like Texas barbecue,” he said. “It’s sort of like Jewish-Texas style barbecue.”) Whole-wheat crust is an option on pizzas, and all the crusts bear charred bubbles and carry a slight tang from a dose of Hamptons Honey. A tough critic who claims he has tried every pizzeria on the South Fork and considers most “bland,” sampled Foody’s clam pie, the three-meat pie, and a pie topped with spinach, and declared it “one of the better pizzas in the Hamptons. The crust is thin and crispy. The toppings are juicy, but not greasy.”

And grease was what Futerman wanted to avoid when he conceived of Foody’s. “One night I was outside grilling,” he recalled. “And I thought, ‘This is what people want—food off the grill.’ It’s primal. It took me over. I got obsessed.” Futerman experimented with different types of wood and cooking temperatures and rubs and marinades that would accommodate the quirks of a grill. For wood he settled on local cherry from a tree trimmer, which sits in two tall stacks outside Foody’s back door; and the menu is heavy with vegetables, fish, and meat that bear its scent. (One avid Foody’s fan told me the scent sometimes sticks with her until she’s home, and she looks forward to the first whiff of it when she returns to the restaurant.)

Grilling, rather than frying, meant that Foody’s could immediately serve healthier food than most restaurants. The only thing Foody’s fries

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are the French fries, “and the fries are great because nothing else goes in the fryer.” And because Futerman considers his offerings to have “a conscience,” he always offers a handful of veggie sides that come in three sizes and make a fitting complement to the bread and cheese of a classic pizza. In spring, it’s broccoli rabe and spinach. In summer, a succotash includes corn and two types of string beans. By winter, it’s roasted potatoes and winter squashes. He remembers with some remorse when, this past spring, he went to the Halsey farmstand on Deerfield Road, and was told that he was getting the last of the potato harvest. By late summer, he was cooking with the same fresh potatoes again. “It’s a great honor to have these farmers here,” Futerman said. Kids that worked at the Halsey farmstand and the nearby Green Thumb, where Futerman also gets produce, have also worked at Foody’s.

Foody’s also makes a point of redefining classic Italian with fresher ingredients. There’s a “local clam pie” topped with freshly shucked clams and Parmigiano, and depending on the time of year, the hero might include weakfish or striped bass or flounder. “As things come in, I have it,” said Futerman. In summer, a refreshingly smooth watermelon-red pepper gazpacho, which sometimes shows up at the table as an amuse-bouche with a dollop of olive oil, finds the blissful balance between spicy and sweet.

And, still, Futerman has figured out a way to keep the prices reasonable enough that a family can eat here multiple nights a week. Part of the reason is that Futerman epitomizes an endangered model—the old-fashioned, family-run restaurant where on a slow night one person might be seating you, taking your order, cooking your food, serving you, and refilling your water glass. On most nights, his wife Jennifer runs the front of the house while Bryan cooks. And on nights without a babysitter, their seven-year-old daughter Danielle might help sweep up at closing time. “I grew up in the biz too,” Futerman said. “I used to go to work with my dad all the time.”

Futerman’s sights are clearly on the future. He is constantly amazed at the number of kids that bring their parents to the restaurant based on tips from friends. “These kids are 10, 12 years old. They’re going to come out here the rest of their lives,” he said. “They’re a good customer base.” Last spring, Foody’s hosted a “Paper Chef” competition for senior students from the nearby Hayground School as part of the school’s internship program that emphasizes work in the real world. Futerman divided the kids into two teams and presented each with ingredients from which they had to come up with a pasta dish and a pizza. “It was a draw,” he said. “I declared no winner. It’s a cooking competition, right? You can’t have a winner. It’s food, and it’s all really a matter of taste.” □

RECIPE

LONG ISLAND CHEESE PUMPKIN SOUP

by Brian Futerman, Foody’s, Water Mill

1 Long Island Cheese Pumpkin (4-6 lb.) (Butternut squash may substitute)	of ginger, nutmeg, allspice, tumeric, cardamom)
2 onions (large dice)	salt and pepper to taste
½ t. Curry powder	½ c. olive oil
1 pinch Cayenne pepper	2-3 qt. chicken stock or water
½ t. razel hanout or Chinese Five Spice (or your own combination	2 T. Southampton wildflower honey
	2 T. maple syrup
	2 T. brown sugar

1. Place whole pumpkin in roasting pan with one inch of water. Roast pumpkin in 450 degree oven until thoroughly cooked and can be easily pierced with a knife.

2. Remove from oven and let cool enough to be handled. Cut open at top and scoop out seeds and carefully remove pulp from the skins. Reserve the pulp in a bowl.

3. Preheat soup pot on stove with oil and slowly sweat the onions until translucent. Season with salt and pepper. Add spices and cook for one to two minutes. Add cooked pumpkin and cook for one to two minutes more. Add enough water or chicken stock to barely cover the mixture. (It is always easier to add liquid to a thick soup than to try to thicken a thin soup.)

4. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer covered until all ingredients are soft, about 15 to 20 minutes.

5. Remove from heat, add honey maple syrup and brown sugar, and puree with a hand blender, add liquids to adjust thickness as desired. Season with salt and pepper. Blend until smooth. Strain through a fine strainer. Adjust the seasoning to taste with salt and pepper, curry, or cayenne. Serve hot.