

**Aol Travel.**

CANADA

## Going Deep Dish in Chicago

by D. Grant Black



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Chicago is famous for more than Al Capone, John Cusack and Tina Fey. Chicago-style deep dish pizza can be found on pizzeria menus across North America but nothing compares to eating authentic deep dish in its Midwestern birthplace.

When I was in Chicago recently, my partner Patricia and I were lucky enough to eat at the newest location of Lou Malnati's Pizzeria, north of downtown. Lou Malnati's Pizzeria has an astounding 34 locations in metropolitan Chicago and its suburbs yet the pizza quality, according to any Chicagoan I asked - a buttery, flakey crust; sweet, tangy tomatoes; gooey mozzarella cheese; and perfectly seasoned sausage - is consistently flavourful at every location.

During the coldest season, many Canadians will travel to Chicago for an Original Six hockey pilgrimage. If that's the case, before you see a Black Hawks game, go out for real Chicago deep dish pizza at Lou Malnati's Pizzeria ([loumalnatis.com](http://loumalnatis.com)).

When we arrived for lunch at the newest location in the Gold Coast, a trendy district north of downtown, there's a very large entrance photo: the founder, Lou Malnati, and a smiling Bobby Hull from the early 1970s (when Bobby still played with the Black Hawks). This photo of Bobby and Lou in dark suits — holding a fresh pizza and "TAKE ME HOME" in bold letters above them — sets the tone for this family-run Chicago institution.

Lou Malnati's is considered the oldest family

name in Chicago pizza. Lou got his start in the 1940s when he worked in Chicago's first deep dish pizzeria.

Lou took his pizza expertise, his wife, Jean, and their young family to Lincolnwood, a northern Chicago suburb; they opened the first Lou Malnati's Pizzeria on March 17, 1971.

Lou thought it was funny that an Italian should open a pizzeria in a Jewish neighborhood on an Irish holiday but he was known for both his fun-loving character and Chicagoland's best pizza. On opening day, Lou witnessed curious patrons line the streets for a taste of his delicious deep dish creations.

Lou Malnati died much too early in 1978. But his eldest son, Marc, just out of college at the time, picked up the pizzeria reins along with his mother, Jean. A few years later, Rick, Marc's brother, joined in to expand this deep dish dynasty to its 34 present locations – but only in Chicago and environs. Why would you want to eat Chicago deep dish pizza in cities named New York, Detroit or Cleveland?

When Marc hosts us for lunch, he's happy that a couple of Canadians easily recognized Bobby Hull in the photo at the front entrance with Lou. Like

the Esposito brothers and Jonathan Toews, Bobby "the Golden Jet" Hull is another Canadian Black Hawk (1957-1972) who made his early mark in the City of Broad Shoulders. We're about to enjoy the Malnati family's Midwestern hospitality, their rumoured great food and excellent service from their servers (25 percent of Lou Malnati's full-time staff have given 10 or more years of service).



Gold Coast location north of downtown Chicago - D. Grant Black

The unpretentious Gold Coast location at 1120 North State Street, a former grocery store, has a casual, diverse customer base. While waiting for

our meal, we watch with amusement as a large adjacent table with a dozen college guys tearing through multiple pizzas and jugs of beer. They look like regulars.

To start, we share a large, very fresh Caesar salad and bruschetta on fresh toasted bread, sprinkled with fresh basil. Then we're ready for our first-ever Chicago deep dish pizza - in Chicago, of course, which arrives like a giant golden cake.



Bruschetta and Caesar salad

Marc tells us that every Lou Malnati's pizza is handmade from scratch, with quality, fresh

ingredients, such as California vine-ripened tomatoes (selected for their sweet and tangy taste), an exclusive sausage blend that's seasoned to Malnati's specifications and mozzarella cheese from the same small dairy that's supplied these deep dish pizza masters for over 40 years.

Marc says the buttery, flakey crust is a secret family recipe, passed down from generation to generation.



Deep dish delight

As soon as Marc turns to head back to the front entrance, we tear through our deep dish pizza like college kids. By our last bite, we decide it was

definitely worth coming all the way to Chicago to try. If Bobby Hull can make the trip, so can we.

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