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## Black Sheep Coal Fired Pizza

by [Jeremy Iggers](#)

posted on Oct. 29, 2008 - 9:59am



The timing for Jordan Smith's Black Sheep Coal Fired Pizza couldn't be better.

Lots of people are feeling poorer these days, and less certain about the future - myself included. With entrée prices at even the casual neighborhood bistros straddling \$20, and the cost of a glass of wine edging up to \$10, it's pretty easy to run up a triple digit tab for dinner for two - and that feels different than it did before the run of bad news from Wall Street.

So assuming that you don't want to just stay at home and cook every night, and you don't want to eat at Applebee's (currently

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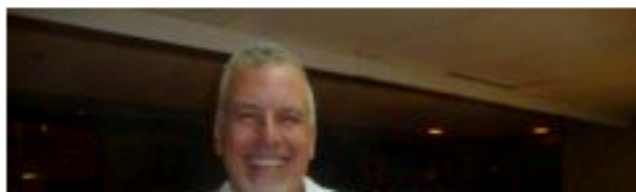
advertising two entrees and an appetizer for \$20), what you need now is cheap chic - places with a modicum of style and some gastronomic ambition that don't break the budget.

The Black Sheep fills that bill pretty well. At the Black Sheep, prices for 12" pizzas start at \$6, and you can split a 16" pizza - big enough to share - for as little as \$12.(That's for a basic tomato and oregano pie. You'll probably want to dress it up a little, with ingredients like smoked mozzarella, fennel sausage or cracked green olives, for \$2/\$3 a topping.) Split a house salad (\$6), split half a liter of the house red (\$12), or a couple of pints of a local microbrew (\$4.50) and your tab still comes out on the friendly side of \$40.

We ordered two small pizzas - one topped with fennel sausage, hot salami onion and cracked green olives (\$11/\$20) and the other a half-and-half combo, with Manila clams and garlic on one half (\$14/\$24), and oyster mushrooms, smoked mozzarella and rosemary on the other (\$13/\$22).



Jordan Smith is the chef who opened Mission American Kitchen, and before that, he worked for D'Amico & Partners for a dozen years or so. He's got a passion for pizza, and his



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inspiration for the Black Sheep came from the neighborhood pizzerias of New York City that still use coal-fired ovens. The huge new pizza oven in his open kitchen that burns anthracite coal on one side, and natural gas on the other.



I am not sure what the actual benefit of coal is, beyond allowing Smith to market the Black Sheep as the first coal-fired pizzeria in Minnesota. That sets it apart from the wood-fired pizzerias, which are abundant these days. I would expect that coal would impart less flavor than wood burning ovens, which sometimes give pizzas a faintly smoky flavor. These pizzas didn't taste smoky, but they were terrific - the flavors were robust, and the crust thin and crispy.

A website at [www.blacksheeppizza.com](http://www.blacksheeppizza.com) is supposed to go up later this week.

Black Sheep Coal Fired Pizza, 600 Washington Ave. N., Minneapolis 612-342-COAL (2625).



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## 6 READER COMMENTS

**[Jason DeRusha](#)** (not verified)

10:33am

Oct 29

Jeremy, do you know if it's kid-friendly at all? Did they have high chairs?

**[Jeremy Iggers](#)**

10:50am

Oct 29

I just checked with Jordan, and he says they have two high chairs. And the overall vibe is kid-friendly - hip, but casual.

**Lanny (not verified)**

11:03am

Oct 29

One of the benefits, as far as I was informed by a coal-fired Pizzaioli I talked to while in NYC, is that coal burns with much less moisture being released than either gas or wood. So the atmosphere in the oven is drier, which changes the way the crust, in particular, cooks.

**Katie (not verified)**

05:15pm

Oct 31

Jordan told me that the reason for coal is because of the consistency of the heat and overall cooking. He said that wood and coal do not add much or any flavor to the pizza because of the short cooking times needed at such high heat.

**marynmck (not verified)**

07:43pm

Nov 2

We went Friday night, guessing that people would be more interested in costume parties than in pizza. (I pity the fools.) As a native NYer I am biased toward thin-crust pizza, but the Co-Diner, who prefers crust of a Psycho Suzie's thickness, liked it also. Re coal: It burns about 200 degrees F hotter than (most) wood (maybe not aged oak or mesquite). Also, having grown up in the UK in ancient houses heated only by fireplaces, I can testify that coal burns slower than wood while producing the same or greater heat. A house coal fire, you end up feeding about half as often as a wood fire. Possibly the same is true for pizza ovens.

**Rich Goldsmith**

03:25pm

Nov 12

All that needs to be said is ricotta, mushrooms and meatballs FTW.

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PO Box 3690

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