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FOOD & RESTAURANT NEWS

BEST BITES

Preview of Piola: Thin-Crust Pizzas and a Generous Happy Hour

Plus: Eat there before May 26 and your food is half price.

By **Anna Spiegel**



Nearly 40 pizzas are the focus of Piola's menu, though you'll find much more to snack on than just the wood-fired pies. Photographs by Andrew Propp.

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The 14th Street corridor gained three new pizza spots in the past two weeks. First came [Ghibellina](#), the Tuscan-inspired restaurant by the [Acqua Al 2](#) crew, followed closely by [Etto](#), a Neapolitan-leaning eatery by the owners of [2 Amys](#) and the [Standard](#). Now the international chain Piola opens its doors with the most extensive list of pies yet, plus a daily happy hour featuring gratis bar snacks.

Founded in Treviso, Italy, 30-plus Piolas (Pioli?) now dot the globe, including one in Arlington, the chain's first Washington-area effort. Owner **Nabil Ashi** says menus at the new local restaurants are largely the same, though the two spaces look significantly different. Fitting for a neighborhood undergoing constant construction and expansion, the version in lower Columbia Heights boasts an industrial look with exposed pipes and wood floors, though high ceilings, large windows, and skylights give it a lofty feel. A second-story back deck is also in the works for the summer.

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The three-story pizzeria has a modern, industrial feel thanks to exposed pipes, colorful accents, and plenty of natural light.

The menu of more than 40 pizza options is divided between red and white pies, all thin-crust and fired in a wood-burning oven. In addition to classic Italian combinations such as a margherita or *capricciosa*, with ham, mushrooms, and artichokes, you'll find influences from Piola's other international locations. The Rio de Janeiro pie, for example, arrives with creamy Brazilian Catupiry cheese and pulled chicken; a starter salad of arugula, pistachios, and pomegranate dressing is a nod to Turkish cuisine. Antipasti and a variety of pastas run more traditional, with dishes like beef carpaccio and Bolognese with pappardelle.

Happy hour runs from 5 to 8 every day—a nod to the Italian tradition of snacking while you drink. Bar-goers receive waves of free bites—think bruschetta, small pizzas, olives, cheeses, and tastes of risotto—and discount drinks include \$3 Peroni drafts, \$4 glasses of house wine, and \$5 specialty drinks such as sangria, bellinis, and Negronis. The generous vibe extends to opening week—all food (sorry, no alcohol) is offered at a 50 percent discount through May 26. After that, look for “gnocchi day” on the 29th of each month, where you can get all-you-can-eat house-made potato dumplings with a range of sauces.

Piola. 2208 14th St., NW; 202-986-8729. Open Monday through Thursday 5 to 11, Friday 5 to 1, Saturday 11 to 1, and Sunday 11 to 11.



A number of dishes are inspired by the chain's international locations, as in this Turkish-inspired salad with pistachios and pomegranate dressing.

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Thin-crust pies are divided between red and white (no sauce), with plenty vegetarian toppings as well as meats such as prosciutto di Parma and fresh sausage.



Many of the dishes are simple Italian preparations such as spaghetti alla crudaiola with mozzarella fior di latte and fresh basil.

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