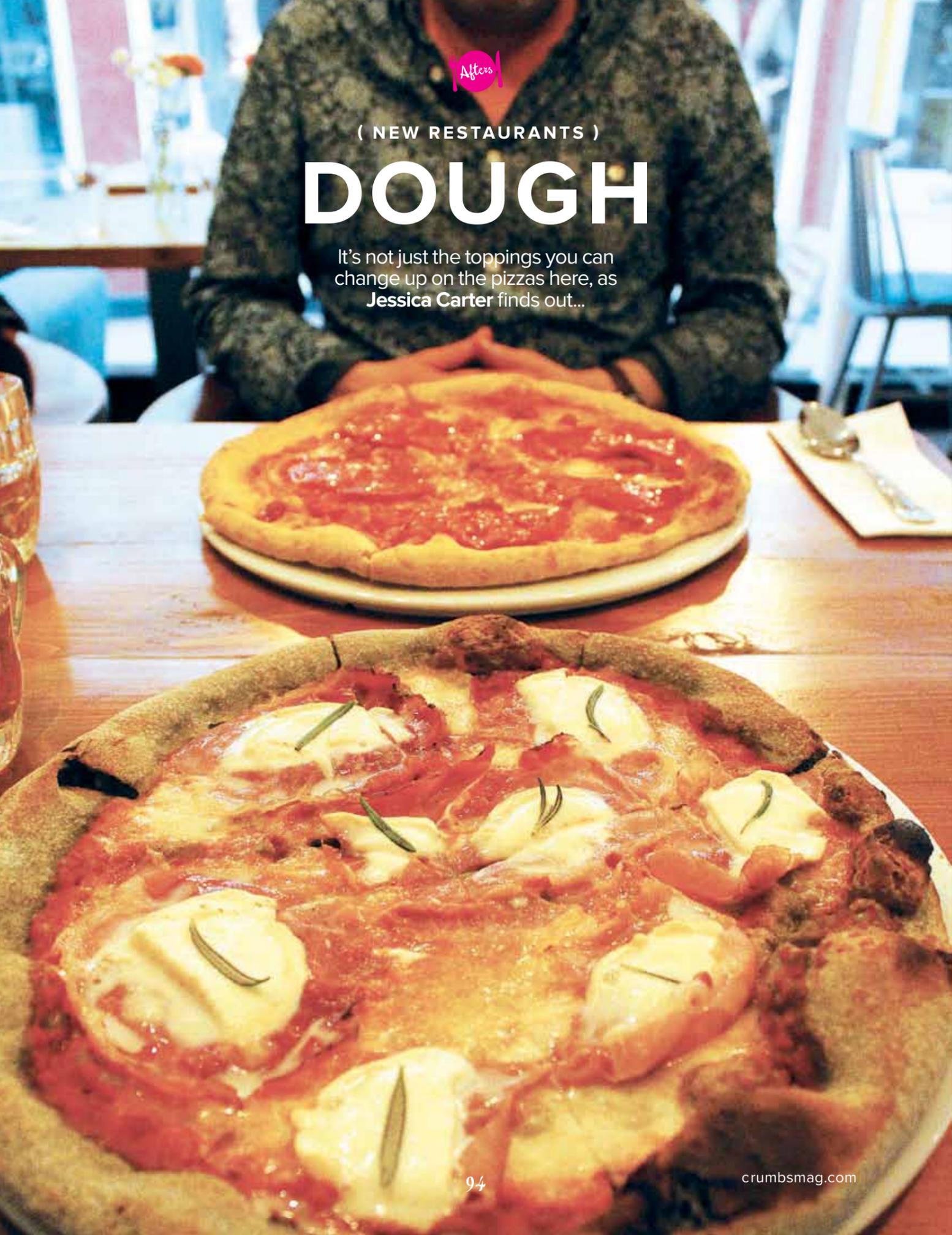


(NEW RESTAURANTS)

DOUGH

It's not just the toppings you can change up on the pizzas here, as Jessica Carter finds out...



THE BASE TASTED WHOLESOME AND DELICATELY SMOKEY, AND HAD A LIGHT, FLUFFY TEXTURE, FORMING CRISP BUBBLES AT THE CRUST

Pizza can really divide opinion: everyone has their favourite toppings, their own go-to pizzeria, and an opinion on the whole pineapple debate. (Unnatural and wrong, or delicious genius? I know where I stand.) The dough, though, doesn't really get much press. Okay, so you'll have a favourite corner in the thin-and-crispy vs deep-pan ring, but what about its flavour? Truth is, with all those toppings, the base is often totally overshadowed – unless it's really *bad*, that is. (No-one likes a soggy bottom...)

This new pizza joint in Bath, though, is casting the spotlight on the all-important vehicle that carries those toppings into your gob – the base – by giving you options for *both* elements. There are plant- grain- and spice-based doughs – think hemp, turmeric, grano arso, Kamut and multi-cereal (all at a £2 supplement) – as well as a gluten-free number (£2.50), all with their own nutritious benefits, which are described on the menu. Sounds interesting, right? It's even more so when you consider that, as far as we're aware, nowhere else is doing anything like this in these parts (there aren't even many doing it in *Italy*, founder Massimo Nucarò told us).

The smell of authentic, fresh pizza dough whacks you round the chops (in the most welcome way) once you get yourself through the door. And it's likely this will come alongside the sight of a raw base spinning through the air at impressive speeds in the open kitchen. It feels proper Italian here, although looks pretty contemporary with the sleek new decor. Even the bottled beer we sipped on (Messina) tasted of sunny European holidays.

We didn't go in headfirst straight away, instead dipping our toes with a couple of non dough-based starters. One was a gravlax salad (£7.95), which saw fresh, mild salmon slivers wrapped around a core of dressed rocket to form a parcel. Simply arranged with classic flavours, it let the good quality ingredients talk. The other was a comforting cheese fondue-style affair (£6.95). Creamy, cheesy lava was given a lift with lime and pink

pepper, and came with polenta croutons. We also had some extra freshly baked carb on the side, for dunking.

There was a list of mains that weren't pizza on the menu – think tomato gnocchi (£9.95), mushroom and truffle-oil pasta (£10.95), and aubergine parmigiana (£9.95). But we turned the leaf for the stars of the show and chose the Smokey (£13.95) on a grano arso base, and the Calabrese (£11.95) on turmeric (which is a spice known for its medicinal anti-inflammatory properties, as well as the potassium and vitamins it contains. You don't get all that with your average pizza, do you?).

The former sported a greyish base, which tasted wholesome and delicately smokey (grano arso means burnt grain, to the best of my knowledge), and had a light, fluffy texture, forming crisp bubbles at the crust. It carried a rich tomato sauce (which comes from near Massimo's home in Southern Italy), shavings of prosciutto, hunks of milky mozzarella (imported from an area close to Naples) and a scattering of fragrant rosemary needles.

The latter's base was a bright yellow-orange colour. On top of it was the same fresh tomato sauce, along with salami and nduja – a soft and spicy sausage paste that we're seeing crop up on menus more of late. Slices of yellow pepper added a sweetness to balance the spice and richness of all that meat.

Both doughs had good texture and flavour. You could tell they weren't your average, although their flavours weren't exactly pronounced (it would be difficult to overcome the toppings, to be fair). What you *do* get, though, is added nutrition (without the usual compromise on satisfaction or flavour), alongside just the right amount of novelty. And more than a little reason to not leave your crusts, of course...

Dough is doing something a bit different – and pretty interesting – while keeping the respect for this classic and already well-loved dish. ■

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