

Exploring Chandler starts with a 6-mile drive for pizza

I think I owe an apology to most of the citizens of Chandler. No, not because there is a good chance that at one time or another I have cut you off while driving (although, sorry about that, too) but rather, because I am lazy.



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My laziness has caused me to miss the obvious fact that Chandler exists beyond a 2-mile radius from my home. I live in northern Chandler and rarely venture further south and east than downtown. It's not like I am wearing some sort of shock bracelet that physically prevents me from going farther south and east than downtown; I just don't seem to have the energy or motivation to make the journey.

As a result, many of my columns end up catering to those residents who happen to live in my vicinity. Lucky them. But, as I found out last week, there may well be things in other parts of Chandler

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worth driving more than 2 miles for.

My odyssey to the far reaches of our city came about as a result of a column I wrote a couple of months back about pizza. As an ex-Brooklynite and confirmed pizza snob, I have written my fair share of columns about pizza and whenever I do I get a slew of e-mails from people telling me about their favorite pizzerias.

The pizza place that I most frequently write about is La Famiglia, which is happily within my 2-mile radius, but the pizza place that I am most frequently e-mailed about is Venezia's. On the northeastern corner of Pecos and McQueen, the place is so far south and east of me that it might as well be in San Antonio.

Because I didn't want to put the wear and tear on my car that the 6-mile drive would have caused, I never bothered checking the place out — despite the raves from many of my readers. But then I

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got an e-mail from the owner of Venezia's, and it was clear from our exchange that here was a man who was passionate about pizza. I decided it was my duty as a journalist to accept his personal invitation and make the grueling drive to his restaurant.

So, one night last week, I packed a few jugs of water and some extra CDs in my car and made the journey to Pecos and McQueen.

Dominick Montanile, the owner of Venezia's, could not have been nicer. I could tell he was excited for me to taste the pizza, and right before I took my first bite I thought, "Oh no, what if this is crappy

pizza? What do I say to this guy?" Turns out I didn't have that dilemma.

For only the fourth time in the 13 years that I have lived in Arizona, I found a pizzeria worthy of my Brooklyn-born palate. Venezia's is the real deal, and it makes me wonder what other pleasures might lurk 7 or even 8 miles from my house. If I weren't so lazy, I might just find out.

Andrew J. Schwartzberg, a former assistant editor at Mad magazine, writes about the lighter side of life in Chandler, where he lives with his wife, son and cat. Reach him at ajschwartzberg@yahoo.com.