

# Jules Thin Crust is Danville's new jewel

## JULES THIN CRUST

★★★½

**FOOD:** ★★★

**AMBIENCE:** ★★

**SERVICE:** Friendly, speedy counter service.

**WHERE:** Danville Livery and Mercantile, 820 Sycamore Valley Road West, Danville.

**CONTACT:** 925-743-2790, www.julesthincrust.com.

**HOURS:** 11:30 a.m. – 8:30 p.m. daily.

**CUISINE:** Pizza, with a seasonal, organic twist.

**PRICES:** \$.

**VEGETARIAN:** 19 vegetarian pizzas with a broad range of ingredients.

**BEVERAGES:** Limited beer-and-wine menu; homemade ice tea.

**RESERVATIONS:** No.

**NOISE LEVEL:** Mild.

**PARKING:** Parking lot in front.

**KIDS:** Bring the kids; high chairs and booster seats available.

**PLUSES:** Fast, healthful food at an affordable price; an easy spot for families looking for a quick, nongreasy meal.

**MINUSES:** The large pizza takeout box will not fit in most refrigerators.

**DATE OPENED:** May.

### Policy

We don't let restaurants know that we are coming in to do a review, and we strive to remain anonymous. If we feel we have been recognized or are given special treatment, we will tell you. We pay for our meal, just as you would.

### Star key

- ★ Fair
- ★★ Good
- ★★★ Great
- ★★★★ Extraordinary

### Price code

- \$ Most entrees under \$10
- \$\$ Most entrees under \$20
- \$\$\$ Most entrees under \$30
- \$\$\$\$ Most entrees under \$40

By **Chrissa Ventrelle**

*Correspondent*

IT DOESN'T seem fitting to call Danville's Jules Thin Crust "a pizzeria." It bears little resemblance to the dimly-lit spots that host game-watchers, soccer parties and penny pitchers. At Jules, high ceilings, natural light and open seating create a contemporary, clean, family-friendly feel. Gigantic playful photos of one owner's daughter echo the inviting sentiment.

When guests order at the counter, they will notice that Jules' offerings do not look much like the pizza pie they grew up with. The organic crust is so thin it's nearly crackerlike. And nothing is pie-shaped about this pizza. These oblong pizzas look more like skateboards than Frisbees.

The pizzas feel Californian, a modern iteration of the West Coast spin first presented by Wolfgang Puck in the 1980s. As with other new blooming pizzerias of this ilk, intriguing flavor combinations make the menu exciting but not intimidating. They are also lower calorie than their old-school friends and don't leave you feeling greasy or gluttonous.

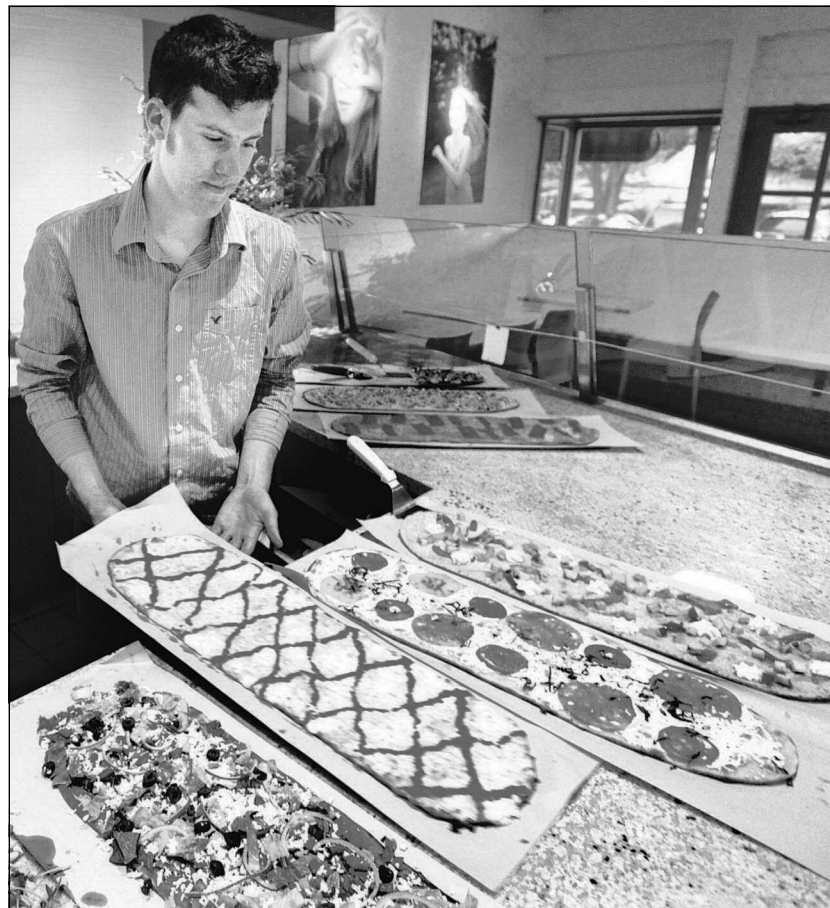
Jules gets high marks for offering a product so in tune with its market. The pizzas are reasonably priced, relatively healthy and flavorful, fitting the East Bay eating ethos perfectly. The ultrathin crust isn't the same as it is in Italy but it channels the same energy. It's a wonderful base to top with fresh, mostly organic ingredients that speak for themselves.

### East to west

Surprisingly, Jules comes to Danville by way of Pennsylvania. Piedmont residents Heather and Jeff Clapp encouraged their friend, John Ordway, as he developed this concept in three Jules locations on the East Coast. Eventually, the Clapps and Ordways partnered up to open one in the Bay Area. After an exhaustive search for the right location, they settled on Danville because of its family focused community.

Customers order at the counter, where they can create a custom pizza (starting at \$11.50), select from a menu of 27 whole pizzas (starting at \$12.50), or choose from a variety of slices (each under \$3) prepared ahead of time. Slices and salads are served on the spot.

The veggie pizzas are the most inviting. They are inventive, but made



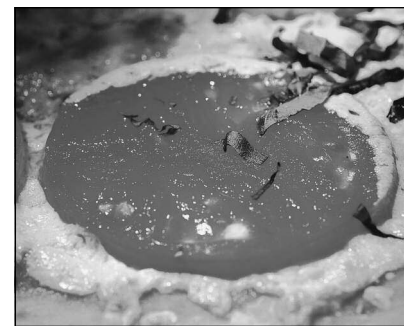
DOUG DURAN/BAY AREA NEWS GROUP

Vinny Malzone of Berkeley gets a pizza ready for the dinner rush at Jules Thin Crust Pizza in Danville.



Veggie No. 1 pizza, left, is topped with feta cheese, kalamata olives, red onions, fresh chopped organic tomatoes, romaine and organic tomato sauce. The Veggie No. 13 boasts fresh mozzarella, organic sliced tomatoes, oregano, basil and extra virgin olive oil.

from widely familiar ingredients. At the top of my list is a monochromatic beauty made of Brie, sliced pears, mozzarella, toasted almonds and rosemary. The flavors all fit together elegantly, but the unexpected yet subtle crunch of the almonds stands out. Another solid option comes with artichoke hearts, chopped tomatoes,



arugula, garlic, mozzarella, fresh cubed mozzarella and Gorgonzola. Carnivores will appreciate the hormone-free meats. While traditional pepperoni and sausage toppings are available, it's worthwhile to try something more adventurous, such as one with fig jam, Gorgonzola, prosciutto and arugula.

The classics also are worth checking out. Both the basic cheese pizza and the Brooklyn pie were well received by our group. The Brooklyn pie was particularly good-looking with its crisscross pattern of drizzled tomato sauce.

### Gluten-free goodness

In addition to organic whole-grain white or wheat crust, Jules makes a special gluten-free pizza dough (available in whole pies only). When coupled with gluten-free cupcakes (\$3.50 each) provided by nearby Miglet's bakery, it's a coming-home party for celiac sufferers who long have avoided these Americana favorites.

Jules also offers a handful of salads (all under \$6; add roasted chicken for \$1.25) — and I'm told soup is on the way. The Goat Fiesta salad (\$5.95), for example, mixes goat cheese, micro and mixed greens and walnuts. Everything about this salad is orderly, but it needs more oomph to stand out.

Service isn't a major part of the dining experience at Jules, but I found both the owners and staff to be enthusiastic and friendly. We were greeted immediately and our order was ready quickly. Also, a manager offered us complimentary leftover slices at closing time rather than throwing them out.

Another reason to like Jules is that the owners are diving into the community, particularly with elementary school fundraisers. They also take care to own an environmentally responsible restaurant, with a focus on minimal packaging and a robust composting/food recycling program.

Online ordering makes takeout easy, although customers should be forewarned that a large pizza may be too long to fit into their fridge. It might be fun to buy several types of pizza for a casual party or cut them into bite-size squares for appetizers.

Sometimes a restaurant offers one amazing dish that turns us into loyal customers. More often, though, it's a general feeling, a sense of connection that draws us in and lures us back. This is the case with Jules. The owners have created something special in Danville — affordable, healthful fast food for everyone.

Contact *Chrissa Ventrelle* at [cventrel@hotmail.com](mailto:cventrel@hotmail.com).