
BEYOND BROOKLYN

BY GABRIELLE LANGHOLTZ

AMERICA'S FAVORITE SANDWICH

Binny's Brooklyn Reuben has a posse.

Binny's Brooklyn Reuben has been called the best sandwich in America. It's won blind taste tests against top delis in Manhattan, is reported to make grown men weep and was knighted by Ed Levine "one of 22 sandwiches that will change your life."

Wondering why you can't call to mind the taste memory of this hometown pastrami-kraut-Swiss combo, kissed by the zingiest Russian dressing and bookended by perfect

pumpernickel? Because it's an airplane ride away, that's why.

Way out west in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Zingerman's Delicatessen has for 20 years been not-so-quietly building a reputation as well worth the bumpy, red-state-spanning ride. The lovingly stocked shop makes Murray's look tame, and the line for sandwiches can approach JFK-Detroit flight time. Though competition is as heated as Zingerman's own bakery ovens, #48, Binny's Brooklyn Reuben, is widely revered as the sandwich of sandwiches. Zingerman's Front-of-House Manager Darin Latimer himself solemnly testifies, "I believe that sandwich is the single best sandwich on the whole menu, even more than the one that's named after me."

So just what makes this remarkable reuben a Brooklynite? "The sandwich was named for Kitty Koppelman," Latimer explains. "She worked here when we opened in '82 and her nickname was Binny, and she was from Brooklyn. If she had been from Cheboygan, we may have called it Binny's Cheboygan Reuben."

But she wasn't, and the accidental name has led to an old-Dodgers-jersey-inspired T donned by the deli's devoted, as well as some controversy over the years. Weren't reubens invented at Reuben's in Manhattan? And shouldn't they be made with corned beef? "I think it's just a fluke that we call a pastrami sandwich a reuben," admits Latimer. "People now think pastrami means some traditional Brooklyn variation. Once in a while I'll have an irate Manhattanite



who tries to set me straight. Usually the complaints are from Carnegie Deli customers. New Yorkers can be a little more demanding than the usual Midwestern customers, but we get a lot of compliments from people from Brooklyn."

Despite the pastrami transgressions, the sandwich has devotees near and far, and if you can't make it to Ann Arbor, it can come to you. My locavore community was aghast at the fossil fuel cost, and my boyfriend at the price tag, but for a mere \$75 (serves two, or \$95 to serve four) the sandwich can be yours, or at least its unimprovable ingredients can, plus assembly instructions (slice and toast bread, steam pastrami, apply sauerkraut, Emmentaler Swiss and sauce, then pan-fry). The iced Styrofoam box even proffers pickles, redskin potato salad and two brownies, all packed in a jet-setting picnic tote, but do people really go to this trouble for lunch?

"Our mail-order business has a pretty fanatical followings both out east and out west," reports Latimer. "At Christmastime and any sort of food-giving time, #48 is always right up there with our bestsellers. Some even get shipped to Brooklyn."

So maybe it's a fluke that this spectacular sammy bears our name. "But it's got sass," says Latimer. "I think it would fit right in in Brooklyn." □

Zingerman's Deli

www.zingermans.com 888-636-8162