

**EATS: YOUNG & HUNGRY**


## Pizza at Bebo: No Dough

No Fire in the Hole: Roberto Donna is still waiting on Arlington County for his slice of the pie

By **TIM CARMAN**  
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Two words are stamped across the pizza section of **Bebo Trattoria's** menu: coming soon. But three months into the rustic-minded restaurant's existence, the pledge is starting to ring hollow—the Crystal City equivalent of D.C.'s never-ending promise to redevelop Georgia Avenue.

Roberto Donna, it seems, has run into a brick wall known as the Arlington County Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development, which earlier this month rejected Bebo's building permit, including plans to install a wood-burning pizza oven from Naples. With little time to deal with a faceless bureaucracy that controls his pizza future, Donna has hired Joe Spinelli as "expediter."

Spinelli's role may sound like something akin to Harvey Keitel's in *Pulp Fiction*, but he's actually a pro in dealing with regulatory geeks. The president of Restaurant Consultants Inc. has been in the hospitality business 32 years and has, by his own recollection, worked on nearly 10,000 projects, including 30 or so building permits per month.

The Bebo permit request, Spinelli says, has its complications. First, the application wasn't filed until Dec. 1, just as municipal employees were starting to use up their accumulated leave. Second, aside from the pizza oven, the application includes other construction projects, such as installing a new vent hood. When any single project falls on its face—Arlington, to date, has rejected Bebo's oven and hood plans—the entire proposal is sent back to Donna's team to fix the problems.

Finally, Arlington, unlike other jurisdictions, doesn't offer a fast-track option for smaller permit requests. "Arlington County probably takes the longest of all the counties in the area," Spinelli says. "All the different jurisdictions have their own particular problems, but Arlington seems to have kind of gone overboard as far as timelines."

Once he secures the permit, Donna says it will take another two weeks before he can start producing pizzas—classic, handmade Margherita, prosciutto, and Neapolitan pies. Donna knows that every day that passes is money out the door—or, more accurate, money not coming in the door. "I'm pretty sure I could make 15 or 20 percent more [money]" with a pizza oven, Donna says. "It would be two or three thousand dollars more a day, maybe more because I'm going to do delivery."

### Already Spyked?

Some say they look like travel-size bottles of shampoo or mouthwash. Others think they look like tapered containers of nail polish. Whatever they resemble, Spikes were released last summer by Anheuser-Busch with all the fanfare of a new cable-access show; the beer giant is relying on word of mouth and "ultra-viral marketing" to sell the 2-ounce flavored malt-beverage shots, which you can either chug or chuck into your Bud Light. Its hands-off approach may have ensured that the product arrived DOA in the D.C. area.

In creating Spikes, AB product developers noticed that some Europeans mix their beer with soda, Sprite, or ginger ale. "We developed several concepts around that [idea], and this was the one concept that popped the highest" with consumers during tests, says John Giarrante, Anheuser-Busch's product manager for



No Fire in the Hole: Roberto Donna is still waiting on Arlington County for his slice of the pie. (Photograph by Charles Steck)

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delivers to that need for flavor.”

Spykes comes in four flavors: spicy mango, hot chocolate, spicy lime, and the double-entendre-laden “hot melons.” Each also includes three other major ingredients—ginseng, caffeine, and guarana, an extract of a South American plant that adds even more caffeine. In other words, every bottle of Spykes, at 12 percent alcohol by volume, provides that yin and yang of depressants and stimulants that overactive club kids have been skulking for years with their Red Bull and vodka cocktails.

Finding Spykes can be difficult (no doubt even *with* the ultra-viral marketing of a *Washington City Paper* story). The product’s official Web site, [spykeme.com](http://spykeme.com), features a retail locator, but two of the four stores listed in Adams Morgan, Safeway and Metro K Supermarket, don’t carry Spykes at all. AB Liquors on Columbia Road NW used to stock Spykes but stopped after selling only a single bottle. “People don’t want that with their beer,” the owner says.

A Virginia AB wholesaler told me that Spykes were available at 7-Elevens in the Arlington and Falls Church area; stops at three such NoVa convenience stores proved otherwise, though one manager mentioned that he had just recently sold out. The same wholesaler provided me with a short list of bars that peddle Spykes. I visited the Front Page Restaurant and Grille in Ballston, where just about everyone around the bar was sipping Bud Light or Miller Light—none of them spiked with Spykes. “We had [Spykes] for about a month, but nobody bought them,” the bartender tells me over the din.

Just down the road at Bailey’s Pub and Grille in Ballston Common, a bartender says that he has four untouched and unopened boxes of Spykes in the stockroom. I order a hot chocolate Spyke for \$1.50 and dump it into my Bud Light. It tastes like Milk Duds. I pour some of my sweet brew into a glass for the curious bartender. “I kind of like it,” he says. “My girlfriend would like it.”

When mixed with Bud Light, the other Spykes also recall the sweeter flavors of youth. Hot melons tastes like Hawaiian Punch, spicy lime like Sprite, and spicy mango like a hoppy Jolly Rancher. Some other taste testers who sampled Spykes conjure up less flattering comparisons, from nail polish to cough medicine, but their favorite, by far, is the spicy mango. “It’s not bad,” says one taster. “It’s better than drinking Bud Light.”

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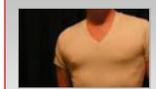
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