

QUICK BITE

This quick-service restaurant is all it's Crack'd up to be

With locations in New Hampshire and on the North Shore, it gives quick-service breakfast a good name

By [Kara Baskin](#) Globe Correspondent, Updated August 11, 2022, 12:24 p.m.



Deano the Butcher burger at Crack'd. PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

Where to Crack'd Kitchen & Coffee.

Why Quick-service breakfast and lunch that tastes like anything but.

The backstory What happens when four pals join forces to open a coffee shop? No, this isn't a "Friends" sequel. It's the very real tale of two couples, Danny and Emma Azzarello and Alan and Meghan Frati. The friends have lots of corporate restaurant experience. The Azzarellos met at Outback Steakhouse and later befriended Alan Frati at Burtons Grill. Frati, meanwhile, met Meghan while working at Texas Roadhouse.



Danny and Emma Azzarello and Meghan and Alan Frati are owner-operators of the new restaurant Crack'd Kitchen & Coffee. PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

Over time, the restaurant veterans noticed a gap in the quick-service, upscale breakfast space.

“You had Shake Shack, Chipotle, and Panera, but no culinary-driven breakfast concepts at a fast pace,” Danny Azzarello says.



Supervisor Brooke Healey hands a customer her order at the drive-thru window at Crack'd in Peabody. PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

Are we name-checking lots of chains here? Don't fret. Crack'd, despite growing to include branches in Salem, N.H., Andover, Mass., and Peabody, Mass. — with a franchise location in Florida — doesn't feel like one.

“We love breakfast sandwiches; we could never find ones with fresh brioche, eggs, cheese, and real people who talk to you and say ‘thank you’ and ‘please’ with a smile. We thought: What if we created this concept? It all started with breakfast sandwiches,” Azzarello says. (Several items are named after their kids.)



Crack'd Kitchen & Coffee in Peabody. PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

The foursome opened their Andover location in 2019, despite some early roadblocks.

“We went to almost 21 different banks before getting a loan,” he says.

Whichever bank took a gamble should be pleased: On a recent visit to the brand-new Peabody location, complete with a drive-thru window, it was packed.

What to eat Banish all thoughts of soggy egg sandwiches and grease-soaked hash browns. Everything tastes cooked to order and fresh, prepared by up to 10 line cooks who report for duty beginning at 4:30 a.m.



Loaded hash browns at Crack'd. PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

I continue to fantasize about the traditional loaded hash browns with cheese sauce derived from real cheese; bacon; and scallions. These hash browns are fluffy cylinders of mealy delight, cooked to crisp perfection, with just the right toppings-to-browns ratio. I'm also a fan of the bean burger, which is moist — sorry, gotta say it — and juicy, despite the lack of actual meat. It's also structurally sound; often, bean burgers disintegrate into something resembling wall insulation on first bite. It's served with a healthy swipe of avocado and hummus on a cloudy brioche from Fireking Bakery in Braintree.



The Sunny Chorizo Bowl at Crack'd. PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

Another hit: a hulking burger called Deano the Butcher — named after the Azzarellos' son — with “BAM” sauce.

“That sauce was a mistake,” Azzarello confesses. “Alan wanted some kind of Thousand Island on the menu. He said, ‘What if we took our house sriracha, ketchup, mustard, and mixed them?’ I said: ‘That sounds disgusting.’ Then I ate it. I said: ‘This is delicious.’”



The Baja Burrito at Crack'd. PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

Sandwiches come with homemade chips dusted in a sweetish-savory seasoning of paprika and brown sugar. There are also the requisite toasts (avocado, hummus, Nutella); salads; quinoa rice bowls; and — for the ravenous — portable yet filling mac bowls featuring egg noodles accessorized with steak tips, caramelized onions, sunnyside-up eggs, bacon from Claremont, N.H.'s North Country Smokehouse, ranch, and more.

The Peabody branch offers drive-thru; on a recent visit, a server in an apron was seen delivering trays to waiting cars like something out of a 1950s movie, smiling despite the 100-degree heat. A “Yolkswagen,” presumably for deliveries, is parked nearby.



The Crackuccino and strawberry lemonade. PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

What to drink Coffee from Manchester, N.H.'s Hometown Coffee Roasters. There are lots of choices beyond regular and decaf, from cold brew to maple pecan to hazelnut honey to a "Nostalgia" iced coffee made with cereal milk and brown sugar (tip: ask for extra milk). There's also a full roster of smoothies and juices. Try the Ginger Spice, a jolty palate-cleanser with a kick of turmeric.



The Superfood Bowl. PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

The takeaway This crack foursome has broken into the restaurant business in a big way. Even if you're not from the North Shore, it's worth the drive.

Various locations, www.crackdkitchen.com



Part of the dining room at Crack'd in Peabody. PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

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This place sounds great. When can they open some south of Boston?



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Good for them, this place looks awesome! How about expanding to Littleton, MA? There's a great shopping center right off 495. :)