Burbacho: Champion of the pizza pies

By Christopher Burbach

On the surface, he's a mild-mannered pizzamaker. Look more closely, though, if you dare; he's got the eve of the tiger. He's Rocky Burbacho!

Doodadoo, doodadoo...

Serendipity

He springs from bed at 8 a.m., eats three raw eggs (the shells, too, Roberto), runs to the water closet, does one or one hundred pushups (whichever comes first) and sprints down rustic old R street to class while school children, waiting for their busses, cheer him on.

"Rocky, Rocky!," they chant.

Doodadoo, doodadoo...

That's all play, though, compared to Rocky's real workout, which takes place in the kitchen of Valentine's Wristorante. The would-be champ, his bulging pecotral muscles straining against a tight-red apron. distributes dozens of pepperoni slices with his massive hands. Left right left right, his fists flash as he covers the pizzas with deft, accurate strikes.

He heaves heavy bags of cheese, his biceps bulging, onto the pizza table. "Ungh, ooh, augh," strains the pugilist as he shatters the mozzarella into tiny bits. "That's what I'm gonna' do to yo' face, Sugar Ray. Shredded mozzarella," Rocky mutters, as the cheese melts in fear.

The contender's manager goads her fighter on. "Let's go, little ladies. Perfect pizzas, now," she jeers.

Up and down the cooler step hustles Rocky, his staccato breaths crystallizing as he presses cavernous cartons of hamburger, vast vats of sausage, bottomless buckets of anchovies. "I'm gonna' be champ, I'm gonna' be champ."

Doodadoo, doodadoo...

A furious flurry of spoon swipes spreads sauces over several skins. Another onslaught produces pizza pies abundant and a smooth combination cheeses the pies, leaving them lying stunned waiting only to be carried off by the oven man.

"That's what I'm gonna' do to you, Marvelous Marvin - shredded mozzarella," the champ growls.

A crowd of school children and elderly people, boys and girls, men and women, black, yellow, red and white, begins to gather at the window to watch Burbacho sweat and sauce. "That's Rocky," one little girl whispers. The murmur spreads, growing louder and louder and more unified until it wells up into a chant "Sling that sauce, roll that dought, c'mon, Rocky, go, go, go!"

The little aspirant does some boxer's boogie on the slippery floor for his admirers, then shows them his moves by flinging pizzas from rack to rack at blinding speed. He clenches his fists and flings his gargantuan arms up in the air. Women and children faint, men cheer.

After work, Rocky plods home. He's tired, dead tired. But one look in his eyes will tell you that there's as low fire burning down deep, that he'll be up at eight again tomarrow, that he'll keep pushing until he either wins or dies. "I'm gonna be champ," the eyes say. Who will dare deny him?

Doodadoo, doodadoo...

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