

## Worldly Delights: Naples

Stephanie Ortenzi finds the five best bets for pizza.



Naples is dead serious about pizza. The European Union is involved. There are codified rules, and Neapolitans will kick up a fuss if anyone strays.

Cooks prepare pizzas at Naples' Trianon Pizzeria

Horrified by the rapid spread of global fast food and frozen 'pizza' that disgraced its original incarnation, a group of Neapolitans formed the *Verace Pizza Napoletana Association* in 1984. Along with the government of Italy, they have set out very precise guidelines for what is deemed worthy of bearing the authentic Neapolitan pizza label.

As a general overview, it is supposed to be made with mozzarella from the southern Apennines. Cow's milk, or *fiore di latte*, mozzarella is preferred over buffalo mozzarella, which can soak the crust. The tomatoes should be locally grown San Marzano, a variety with more flesh. The basil garnish must be fresh and only a leaf or two should be used. The pizza itself must be round, 0.3 cm thick at the centre, the crust no thicker than 2 cm and with a diameter no larger than 35 cm. It must be cooked in a wood-fired oven at about 450° F in no less than 40 seconds and no more than 90. And that's pretty much how it is all over Naples.

Pizza is a single-portion food, crisp, slightly burnt on the bottom and often folded charmingly into quarters, *al fazzoletto* (as a handkerchief) – handy for those times you're zooming around on the back of your *ragazzo's* Vespa.

At the top of the heap of Naples' best pizzerias is **Da Michele**, the favourite of purists and multitudes more. The unassuming *botte* serves only two kinds of pizza: **Margherita**, named for the queen who apparently loved hers with nothing more than tomato, mozzarella and basil; and the further minimalist **marinara**, with tomato, garlic and oregano.

Locals will line up outdoors for an hour or more for just one of these gems. Luckily, they don't sit for a usual two-hour grazing; once they finally get to the front of the line, order and take a seat, they're ready to leave happy and sated in about 20 minutes.

Along with Da Michele, **Trianon**, **Brandi**, **Di Matteo** and **Cafasso** are considered to be the top five pizzerias in Naples. They should be thought of like the world's five most beautiful women; number one may have won the contest, but the other four are just as great. Now that's *amore*. ▣

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