



FRESH FROM IL FORNO The pizzas at Ah' Pizz are made with ingredients imported from Italy.

Really Fast Food

Mike LaMorte has a rather unusual policy at his pizzeria. He says, "We won't make deliveries or even take phone orders." According to LaMorte, an owner of the Montclair eatery Ah' Pizz, "The pizza loses quality during the ride home," and that is unacceptable to him.

Ah' Pizz, open since February, is a Neapolitan-style pizzeria. Like its counterparts in Naples, it uses wood-fired ovens heated to 1,000 degrees. Traditional Italian-American pizzerias, by contrast, use larger gas ovens heated to 500-700 degrees. Because the heat is so intense, the cooking time is significantly less – 90 seconds, to be exact.

For LaMorte, Ah' Pizz is literally a labor of love. "Chris DeLisio, a family friend, had owned a couple of American-style pizzerias," he says, "and he introduced me to Neapolitan-style pizza. I fell in love with it at my first bite. I already owned a few other businesses, but he sold me on the idea of opening a Neapolitan-style pizzeria together. We chose Montclair because we knew the concept would fit in great here."

Shortly after finding their location, the two found their pizza maker: Robert Cino, who spent eight months in Italy studying the craft. Cino, now the third owner of Ah' Pizz, has been obsessed with Neapolitan pizza since

childhood. "I fell in love with it when I was around 11, during a summer at the Jersey shore," he says. "I later got a job delivering pizza at an American-style pizzeria. I loved the atmosphere and decided to open my own place, but I wanted to make the pizza I loved as a kid. So I spent seven months in Naples and one in Pompeii, studying and working. I learned so much there – how to use the wood-fired oven, the need for top-quality ingredients." He brings this dedication to quality to Ah' Pizz, where he uses only San Marzano tomatoes. The restaurant's flour, sea salt, olive oil and oven are likewise imported from Italy.

According to LaMorte, the Pizza Margherita (crushed tomatoes, basil, parmigiano reggiano, fresh mozzarella and extra-virgin olive oil) and Pizza Montclair (pecorino sardo, parmigiano reggiano, cherry tomatoes, porcini mushrooms and truffle oil) are customer favorites. In addition to pizza, Ah' Pizz also serves salads and (at lunch time) sandwiches. There are also regular pasta and seafood specials. Dessert lovers should definitely try the homemade tiramisu or the delicious nutella pizza.

Apparently the three chose their location well. LaMorte remarks, "We've been busy since the day we opened here." One bite of their pizza, and diners will understand why. ■

– DEBORAH SCHAPIRO

AH' PIZZ

7 N. Willow St., Montclair
973-783-9200 www.AhPizz.com

SS BYO ⑦

