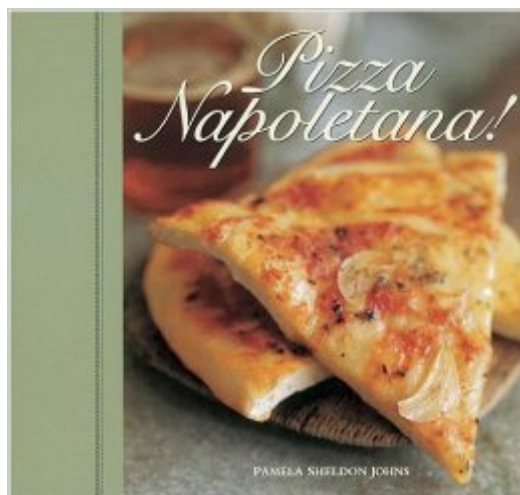


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Pizza Napoletana!



Synopsis

Book by Sheldon Johns, Pamela

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This cookbook covers authentic Neapolitan pizza like I'd hoped to know without actually making a trip to Naples. Pizza history and traditions from the birthplace of authentic pizza are given along with techniques derived from some of the oldest pizzerias in the world. Recipes are provided for classic pizza dough and Neapolitan pizza recipes (Margherita and Marinara) and a quicker dough version, specialty Neapolitan pizza recipes, and regional Italian recipes. The classic versions are strictly regulated in Naples by the Associazione Verace Pizza Napoletana, which is covered in detail in this cookbook. The cookbook photography is outstanding and includes lots of interior shots of Naples pizzerias at work and also excellent food photography. This is a 5-star pizza cookbook and a must-have for serious pizza makers!

While this book is beautifully designed and produced, and has many stunning photographs, as a highly experienced pizza maker, we feel it is best left on the coffee table, and kept out of the kitchen. Unfortunately, form and graphic design are the prime focus. Master pizzaiolos will not lose sleep over this one; no secrets are revealed. Those who wish to learn to make great dough are far better off reading Nancy Silverton.

As a long-time self-taught pizza chef--I've been struggling for 20 years or so--I'm always

immediately attracted to any new book on pizzas. I keep hoping one of them will give me the secret of perfectly round disks of dough (mine usually resemble Australia) or, failing that, offer me fresh tips and little entertainment. Pamela Sheldon Johns has worked hard at that, and to some extent she's succeeded. She's also been sabotaged by the pretensions of the person who designed her book. Johns has done a good job of research; she's clearly gone to Naples instead of the Internet. And Naples is the font of real pizza. When I say "real" I am excluding those culinary crimes that come from franchise operations whose sole claim to fame is rapid delivery. I am also excluding that catastrophe known as "Chicago pizza," which in truth is nothing more than "bread with glop baked on it." And so we learn about authentic ingredients--the right flour for the dough (and how to compensate for the fact that we can't get it here), the best tomatoes, the best cheese. We learn which kinds of pizza are now officially protected species in Italy (this is a complicated bit of legislation best left for Johns to explain). We get a good selection of nicely chosen recipes. So what's to complain about? Well, the truth is this book is hard to read. Johns, like most cookbook writers (most specialists of any kind, for that matter) is not exactly a gifted stylist. OK, I can forgive the cheap trickery inspired by a too-long subscription to *Writer Magazine* ("Whipping in and out of the narrow alleys of Naples, weaving through traffic that blared a cacaphony of sounds, going down one-way streets the wrong way and against red lights, and amid the somewhat, and thankfully, incomprehensible words of the taxi driver slung out the window to his driving adversaries, I mustered the courage and vocabulary to ask . . . what is your favorite pizza?" I can even put up with "Of all the components [pizza crust] is the simple combination of flour, water, salt and yeast that makes it unique" (it comes so tantalizingly close to making sense!). But so what? She tells us how to make really good pizza and doesn't waste much time in doing it. The saboteur here is the designer, who believes books are to be looked at and admired rather than read and used. The photos are plentiful and attractive. The overall presentation is handsome. But it's hard to read. There's no excuse for using 8-point type (ordinary newspaper size) and for spacing the lines so far apart. The ink should be black, not wimpy gray. The ingredients lists are in eye-straining italics. And whenever possible, tiny italic captions are printed over dark backgrounds. The reasons for this are 1) book designers like pretty, arty productions and 2) type interferes with their desperate, artsy pretensions. Useful type is legible: It tends to be large and black; it tends to be straight-up-and-down Roman, with serifs that contain the letters rather than let them bleed into the background. Type, in short, asserts itself because it is meant for the use and convenience of the reader. Type of the sort seen here--tiny, fussy, dim, vague--expresses the designer's self-regard--and his contempt for the reader.--Bill Marsano is an award-winning writer on wine and spirits, and travel.

I am not too disturbed, having bought a used copy for a \$1.50... but the 1999 book no longer contains correct information regarding 'Verace Pizza Napoletana' - the current guidelines can be found in Council Regulation (EC) No 509/2006.

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:040:0017:0025:EN:PDF> - not the book's fault that some rules have changed, but just a heads up for people looking for exact standards. The four 'originals' mentioned in the book - Marinara, Margherita, Margherita Classica and Margherita Extra have been replaced by 3: Marinara, Margherita and Margherita Extra. The bigger issue I have with the book are some of the inconsistencies - e.g. there is a long section on the San Marzano Tomatoes and then the accompanying picture shows 6 cans of which exactly ONE is a true San Marzano - the one opened, showing the actual product is the worst offender of them all - the American 'San Marzano' Brand - they do not even bother using the lycopersicon esculentum variety, though they sure show them on their label - sloppy research. How can you show cup and teaspoon measurements for dough? Every even half serious baker knows those ingredients have to be weighed and the TSG regulation is very clear on that: 1 liter water, 50-55g salt, 3g brewer's yeast, and 1800g of 00 flour. While allowing for substitutions, i.e. AP flour and pastry flour blend as 00 replacement, the book is curiously rigid on mozzarella di bufala, even though that is only required for the Margherita Extra - the Margherita allows for Mozzarella STG, which includes fior di latte (cow's milk). The book specifies the dough balls to be 180g (actually they can be 180-250g.) with a final diameter of 11" and 0.25" thickness - again the real dimensions are: not exceeding 35cm (=13.78") and 0.4cm (+/-10%) (=0.15"). Oven temperature - book: 750-800F - TSG regs: 485C (=905F)... and the list goes on and on, i.e. garnish the pizza on the peel - big no-no - the fully garnished pizza needs to be rotated onto the peel.....but you get the idea. Is all this a little extreme? Probably. However, if I buy a book claiming "In [sic] the next pages, we will explore the precise methods and ingredients needed to re-create [sic] the true, original pizza of Naples [...]", I want the 'true' information (and only a few things have changed since the book has been published - as pointed out earlier in my review) - it is then up to me to what extent I want to adhere to the standards when I make Pizza.

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