



DUSTY KNUCKLE'S RAINBOW PIZZA

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Dough makes dough

Regardless of how you define your doughs, consumers are increasingly recognising the importance of quality and authenticity in their food bases.

Jones also notes that this year's growing demand for delivery and takeout services has only helped drive the already huge popularity of dishes dependent on such bases, like pizza.

Our high streets are awash with a plethora of pizza types – from thin, crispy crusts through to pillowy, chewy bases.

"After many years of eating pizza across the UK and Italy we are absolute in our belief that Neapolitan pizza is impossible to beat," says Debs Lewis, co-founder and co-owner of Cardiff-based Dusty Knuckle Pizza. "Dense, light, chewy, crunchy – full of flavour and with a hint of wood fire – Neapolitan pizza is where it's at."

Like many successful pizza concepts, the team at Dusty Knuckle make the pizza dough fresh on site every day (pictured, below).

"It undergoes a lengthy proving process and is topped by our pizzaioli who cook each pizza at +450 degrees," Lewis adds. "Our proving method allows us to use small quantities of yeast in our dough,



BREADS, BUNS AND BASES

JUST HOW NONNA MAKES IT

Consumers consistently seek authentic cuisine and won't accept second-rate impersonators on a restaurant menu. And these stringent expectations apply to the most fundamental ingredients too: pasta, breads, dough, noodles and more.

"We first opened in 2016 and since then the trend for restaurants specialising in pasta began," says Andrew Macleod, founder of Emilia's Crafted Pasta (which operates from London sites in Aldgate and St Katharine's Docks). "Customers have become far more knowledgeable about pasta and definitely expect more than when we first opened."

It's also likely that many people will have actually visited pasta's country of origin, so know what to expect in terms of quality.

"We believe pasta should be enjoyed as it is in Italy," Macleod continues. "So everything we do revolves around the essence of Italian cuisine – freshness and simplicity. Just as nonna would have done it."

Macleod's pasta is freshly made every morning and cooked with a respect for the tradition and techniques passed down the generations to the cooks he learned from.

"It's all about bringing back memories of that warm tingling feeling you get in your stomach as a child when your nonna cooked you a delicious fresh bowl of pasta after you'd come home from playing outside," he explains.

Using fresh, natural and simple ingredients, Macleod is certain that you can only make great pasta when you're in control of the process from start to finish.

"We make both dried and egg pasta freshly every morning," he notes. "Some people say that fresh pasta (often known as egg pasta) is in some way superior to dried pasta. That's not the case. The difference is that certain sauces work better with egg pasta (e.g. bechamel Bolognese) and others pair better with semolina pasta (e.g. carbonara)."

And that's why Emilia's features both types on the menu. For the dried pasta dishes, Macleod uses semolina only as he prefers the rough texture it creates, allowing the sauce to stick better to the pasta than it would to one using 00 flour, or he uses a mix of both.

"If a dish or sauce isn't performing right you will usually be able to tell by looking at it," he adds. "At Emilia's we often say if a pasta dish doesn't look right visually, then either the pasta hasn't been made properly, the wrong shape has been paired with the sauce, or the sauce hasn't been made properly. When these three things are in harmony you get the perfect mix of flavours in every bite."

Other restaurants championing pasta and winning over diners' hearts (and stomachs) alongside Emilia's in the capital include Pastaio, Bancone and Padella – Macleod attributes pasta's success to its soul-warming quality. It's essentially comfort food that's easy to make – when you know how – and cost-effective.

"Culturally, a lot of places around the world have their own twist on pasta, like noodles and dumplings, giving it a universal appeal," he says.

At Emilia's, the Italian classics like Bolognese and carbonara continue to sell best, though the team are always experimenting with creative twists to make traditional pasta dishes even more flavoursome and exciting for guests.

"Especially those who have special dietary requirements, such as vegan, vegetarian or pescatarian," Macleod points out. "If you haven't already, we'd definitely recommend you come down to try our smoked salmon carbonara, a pescatarian twist on the classic."



EMILIA'S BECHAMEL BOLOGNESE