

S B L S

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A PLAYFUL APPROACH TO WELLNESS



Firing UP a Slice of Tradition

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Forno Classico tells a much deeper story beyond its Italian translation, “classic oven,” to owner and traditional pizza oven artisan, Giuseppe Crisà. Born and raised in Palermo, the capital city of Sicily, Giuseppe learned the trade of hand-crafting classic brick pizza ovens from his *nonno* (grandfather) when he was a young boy, rewarded for his help in dessert: peaches and wine. 12 years ago, Giuseppe had a dream of moving to America—opportunity at just an arm’s length away. In Sicily, Giuseppe was a mechanical engineer. Yet as soon as the plane touched down in California, Giuseppe sought Santa Barbara as the vessel for curating his American dream.

I step into the quaint Goleta manufacturing office warmly greeted by three men waving at me through the glass in the workshop. Before I even sit down, Giuseppe hands me a cup of espresso as he wipes the dust off his hands to shake mine. I am mid-sentence into my first question when he receives an important phone call from his dear friend and world famous *pizzaiolo*, Chris Bianco. At this moment, I know Giuseppe is running a special operation.

After you moved here, what did you do before you wanted to make traditional Italian pizza ovens?
“I tried everything, I could.” Giuseppe begins, “At 29 years old, I took a culinary class at City College. I was a personal chef for celebrities, you name it. It was a very dark moment when I first came to America. I used to change gas tanks in heaters. I used to sell seafood. I used to cry every night. It is a beautiful town, but I didn’t fit. I knew I had to change my attitude. Sometimes you have to be positive.”

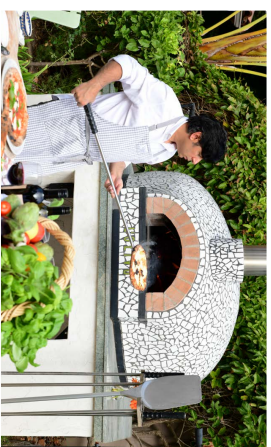
Does the original model for your pizza ovens still exist?
“My first pizza oven, called the Forno Piccolino, sold for \$1,000 on eBay two hours after posting it. I built it in the garage of my Montecito home,” Giuseppe explains. “That first buyer lived in Florida and I would call him almost every day to see how his oven was doing. He eventually told me to stop calling, but now we keep in touch every once in a while.”

Now that Giuseppe had sold his first oven, he gained the courage to start writing the story to his own American dream. Giuseppe explains to me how in order to fund his new business, he made a second oven, bought a trailer, and started a pizza catering company. “I was a mechanical engineer, and now I was the pizza guy! I was the first guy to make pizza in this kind of traditional Italian oven in the United States.”

“After that,” he grins, “I was so obsessed. I was talking about my pizza oven with everyone! I wrote 300 names down before coming up with Forno Classico. Our oven is minimalist. It’s made with clay brick, natural products, and has a long warranty.” Because they’re considered true Italian pizza ovens, Forno Classico ovens can reach up to 1,000 degrees. This level of heat allows the brick to quickly and thoroughly cook a delicious pizza every time the hot flames are ignited. I witness the Forno Classico ovens for myself from the brick assembly all the way to the completed product. Every component of the oven is built with great precision, down to the carefully placed brick interior and the individual decorative tiles that embellish the surface.

Forno Classico produces just 100 ovens annually, each custom made and hand-crafted to Giuseppe’s liking. No oven leaves the shop unless he approves it. “Everyday I try to do something better for my product. We Italians are very picky with our design and precision.” Forno Classico currently has three models available to order on their website: the Forno Capola, the Napoli Famiglia, and the Fiamma Square.

What is your favorite kind of pizza to make using your Forno Classico oven?
“Margherita—it’s the simplest and the best tasting. If you ask any Italian, they will say Margherita pizza.” Giuseppe smirks. “No matter what kind, the idea is to share. The pizza is used to socialize and have a conversation with your friends.”



What does cooking pizza in a traditional Italian pizza oven mean to you and your family?
“I come from a big family in Sicily. Family is extremely important. You don’t have to have a pizza oven to have a good time with your friends, but it is beautiful. The social part of food is very important in Italy.”

He pauses.
“There is a difference between reality and dreaming. For the first three years, I was dreaming a lot,” he continues. “When you’re a small business and you finally have a key to your building, people don’t call you Giuseppe anymore. You’re the pizza guy.”

Giuseppe brought more than his traditional pizza oven-making skills from Sicily to Santa Barbara. He packed his suitcase with courage, tenacity, a dash of wit, and a deep devotion for curating and sharing authentic Italian food—the archetype of the classic American dream. After a nice conversation shared over espresso and creamy chocolate gelato, I leave Forno Classico not only with the story of how these remarkable ovens are made, but with the story of a man who turned his passion into a lifelong career. *
fornoclassico.com