

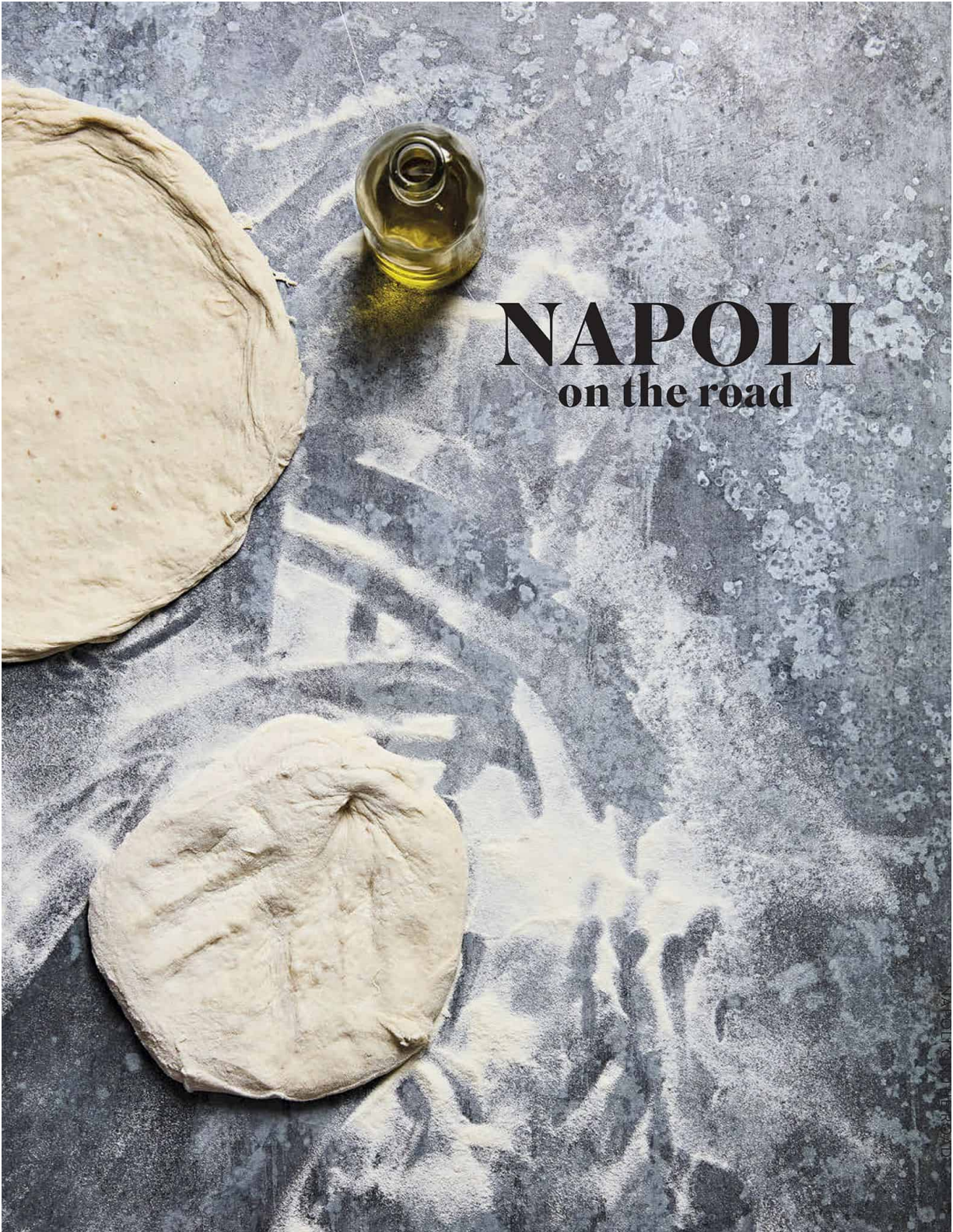
NAPOLI

on the road

CLASSIC & SEASONAL RECIPES FOR NEAPOLITAN-STYLE
PIZZA PLUS ANTIPASTI, DESSERTS & DRINKS



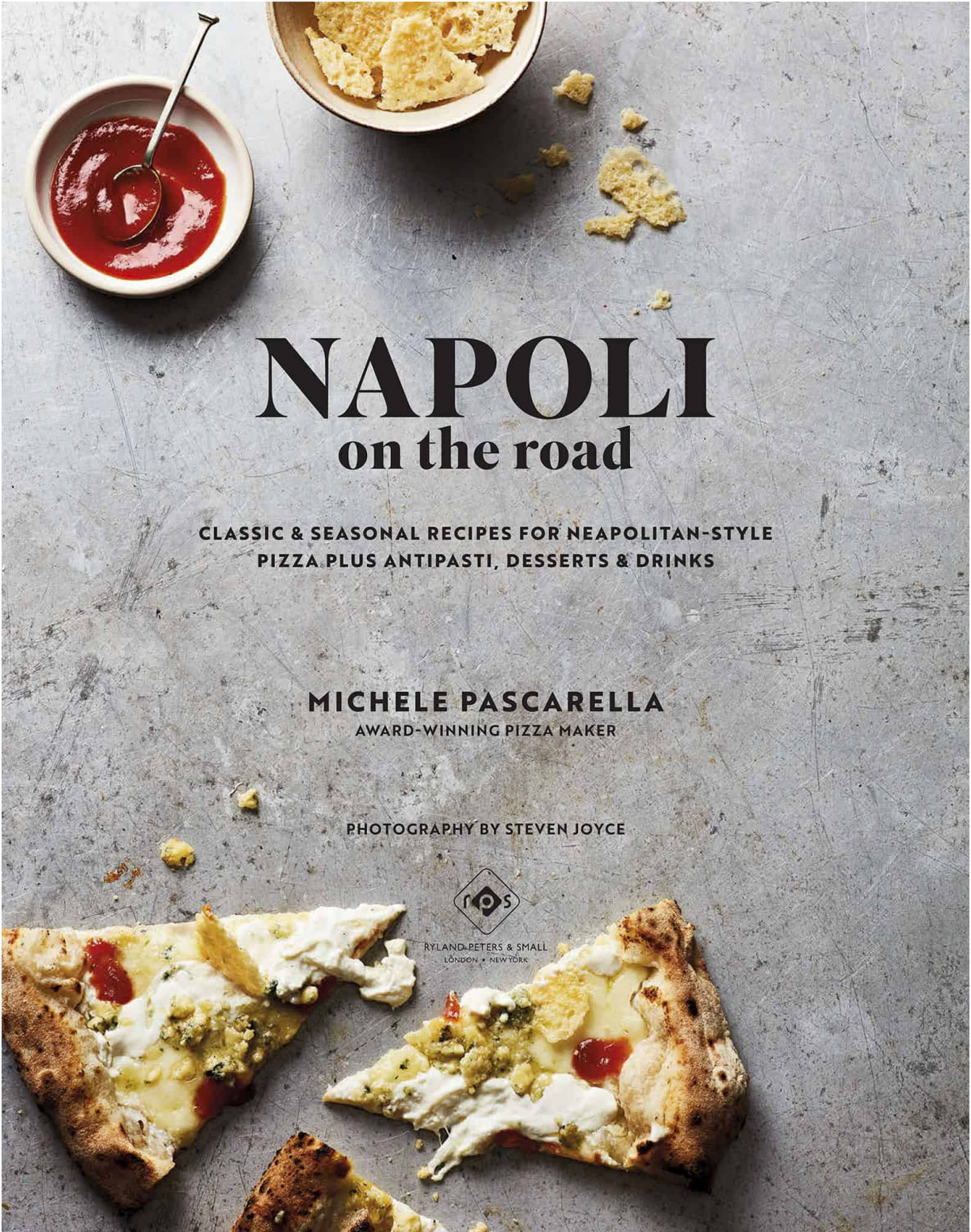
MICHELE PASCARELLA AWARD-WINNING PIZZA MAKER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVEN JOYCE



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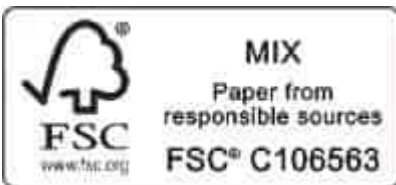
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NOTES

- Both American (Imperial plus US cups) and British (Metric) measurements and ingredients are included in these recipes for your convenience, however it is important to work with one set of measurements and not alternate between the two within a recipe.

- All spoon measurements are level unless otherwise specified.

- The author recommends that liquid ingredients for pizza dough are weighed in g/oz rather than measured by volume. The use of digital scales for this purpose is highly recommended.

- Uncooked or partially cooked eggs should not be served to the very old, frail, young children, pregnant women or those with compromised immune systems.

- A note about cheese: Most authentic varieties of Pecorino and Parmesan use animal rennet in their PDO-protected production processes (usually sheep rennet). This means that they aren't suitable for vegetarians. Pecorino- and Parmesan-style cheeses made with vegetarian rennet are available, so check the label and buy what works for you. Fior di latte and mozzarella are generally made with a non-animal rennet, but again it's a good idea to check the label carefully if in any doubt.



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introduction

As I lift the World's Best Pizza Chef 2023 trophy from 50 Top Pizza, having been crowned the world's best pizza maker, it is my hands that remind me I am not dreaming. It all started with the sense of touch, as my fingers first dipped into flour, testing its soft texture. I soon discovered that adding a bit of water created a dough that could be rolled out and shaped. This was my first pizza experiment, and I was just 11 years old. It was then that I knew I wanted to dedicate my life to making pizza and nothing else.

My brother-in-law was a pizza maker, and I began spending my spare time in the pizzeria where he worked, a place called Grano Cotto in Maddaloni, Caserta, which no longer exists. By watching, asking questions and trying it myself, I eventually started working there. I was learning to make pizzas and my old boss, to help me understand the value and the importance of food, told me 'you have one chance to make your pizza, if you burn the pizza or destroy it, you will not eat any pizza tonight'. This taught me that food is precious and should not be wasted.

I didn't only practise making pizza but also worked in the main kitchen. This background allows me to create recipes and understand the flavours I put on my pizzas. Many pizza makers today lack these skills, preventing them from fully appreciating how to balance

ingredients, timing, cooking, colours, flavours, acidity and bitterness – essential elements for making a proper pizza.

This first phase of my life in Italy ended in June 2011. I left school and headed for Cornwall in the UK to see something of the world beyond my small hometown. After three months in Truro, I returned to Italy briefly before eventually heading to London. London was a turning point. The city offered me opportunities I am forever grateful for. My Neapolitan pizza, born in London and incorporating British ingredients, owes much to this great city. This unique blend enabled me to win a world competition, even surpassing pizza makers in Naples, the pizza capital of the world.

When I arrived in London, I had no money but found work at Sartori, a historic Italian restaurant. I stayed there for four and a half years, teaching myself about dough, different types of flour and the importance of water, salt and leavening. I discovered that a long leavening time of up to 36 hours produces a lighter pizza with a naturally pronounced crust. The customers were happy, and so were the owners, as many people ordered two or even three pizzas.

I had achieved a goal, but I always wondered what the next step would be. At Sartori, I became an integral part of the process, but I wanted to be in charge of the process. That's when the idea for Napoli On The Road was born. Along with another pizza maker from Sartori, we embarked on a new adventure. We counted our money, analyzed the market and realized that with our limited resources, we could only open a street-food business. My investment was relatively small, lent to me by my girlfriend, who in turn took out a bank loan.

We went to Sicily and bought a Piaggio Ape, a small three-wheeled van reminiscent of the one Gregory Peck drove in the movie *Roman*

Holiday. We had a wood-burning oven mounted on it, and in January 2016, Napoli On The Road was born.

The beginning was tough. On our first day, we sold 27 pizzas, and I was thrilled. But we soon realized this wasn't enough to cover our expenses. We had to grow and persevere. I made the dough by hand at home, woke up at 5 am, loaded the van and drove around selling pizzas. In the evening, I worked shifts in other pizzerias. It was a gruelling life that lasted six months, but then came another turning point.





I suggested trying farmers' markets to my business partner. He was sceptical at first, but I was convinced it was the next step. Our first

market in Wembley, close to the football stadium, saw us selling 90 pizzas, a new record. Our numbers kept rising until the market managers asked us to cover their other three markets. We accepted, and at Imperial College, we sold 150 pizzas on our first day – a new milestone.

The real breakthrough came at the One New Change shopping centre in London's St Paul's. After a month and a half, we were averaging 300 pizzas a day, becoming the market's culinary stars. Our success was so significant that large companies paying millions in rent found their restaurants empty, while we paid just a meagre amount in rent each week. They eventually pushed us out. A vacant space in the shopping centre became available and I wanted to take it, but my partner thought it too risky and ultimately we went our separate ways.

In 2018, I continued on my own, feeling it was time for another step. By September 2019, Napoli On The Road transformed into a restaurant. I opened in Chiswick, west London, and the decision to invest in a culturally vibrant, cosmopolitan area paid off. Customers recognized that my pizza was not just any pizza – it was the result of study, research and innovation, all while staying true to tradition.

The first two years were challenging beyond anything we could reasonably have anticipated. Six months after opening, the United Kingdom went into lockdown due to Covid-19. But we held on, continuing with deliveries. The decision to stay open and serve our community during such unprecedented times paid off as it helped us to reach a larger audience. When we reopened the restaurant, many who had ordered from us during lockdown came to dine there and went on to become part of our loyal and regular customer base.

From 2021, accolades began to pour in. The 50 Top Pizza guide listed us among Europe's best pizzerias, awarding us the New Entry prize at 15th place. In 2022, we climbed to 13th. We received two slices from

Gambero Rosso. In May 2023, our pizzeria ranked 8th, and I was named Europe's best pizza maker, earning a spot in the world final.

By the end of July 2023, we opened a second location in Richmond, London, as demand had exceeded our capacity of 300–350 pizzas daily, plus a further hundred for take-away.

On 13th September 2023, in the prestigious Royal Palace of Naples, I was announced as the world's best pizza maker. The news was so unexpected that I could hardly believe it. Pushed by a friend, I stood, smiled, went on stage and lifted the trophy with the very same fingers that tentatively kneaded dough to make my first pizza at age 11.

From the next day, Michele Pascarella and Napoli On The Road were featured in top-tier media worldwide. The British press celebrated me as an adopted son, the Italian press as a son who found success far from home, and the international press marvelled at a Neapolitan pizza maker with thriving pizzerias in London. For the next three months we actually had to disconnect our phones due to the overwhelming volume of booking requests! We have since received eye-watering financial offers to establish a chain of pizzerias, but we will continue to decline these simply because it would compromise our pizza's quality. I always tell our customers that it is better to wait a month for a table to be able to come and enjoy our pizza than never to have it again because by turning Napoli on the Road into a chain, it would inevitably become a mass-produced product.

I am proud to share my recipes with you on the following pages and hope you will enjoy making the pizzas as much as I have enjoyed creating them.

MAKING GREAT PIZZA AT HOME

It is possible to make delicious pizza at home. You may not be able to replicate the authentic experience of eating in a pizzeria in a bustling Naples street, or at one of my restaurants, but you will be able to enjoy freshly baked dough with high quality toppings, full of flavour.

using a conventional oven?

At Napoli on the Road our wood-fired oven cooks at 450°C/840°F whereas conventional ovens only reach 250°C/480°F. As most people making pizza at home will be using this type of oven, my baking method has been devised to allow for this, the aim being to cook the base without drying out the toppings. I give clear instructions in the recipes for cooking each individual pizza and at which stage to add the various toppings, so do refer to these for specific instructions, but here is the basic principle.

Preheating the oven Preheat your oven to the highest temperature it offers for at least 40 minutes. (There is no need to preheat a baking tray/sheet.)

Preparing the pizza base Stretch or roll the pizza dough (see page [15](#)) and place on a heavy baking tray/sheet – this can be the rimmed one that comes with your oven if available, or a round pizza pan.

Adding toppings Add as directed in each recipe.

Initial baking Place the baking tray/sheet with the pizza at the very bottom of your oven, in direct contact with the surface, not on the bottom shelf.

Final baking Once the pizza base is cooked (this will take about 5 minutes, but is dependent on your oven's power), transfer the tray/sheet with the pizza to the upper part of your oven and switch to grill/broil mode. Cook for about 2 minutes, or until the crust is lightly golden. Remove from the oven.

using a pro pizza oven?

If you have invested in an electric, gas or wood-fired pro pizza oven, you will need to follow the method below, which takes the extremely high temperature and thus reduced cooking time into account – almost all models will come with an integral pizza stone.

NOTE Adding olive oil to pizza dough will help create a browned crust when baking pizza in a conventional oven (see recipe on page [12](#)), but omit if you are using a pro oven as the extreme heat will cause it to reach its smoke point much faster and start to degrade.

Preheating the oven Preheat your oven to 400°C/750°F for at least 30–60 minutes to ensure it reaches the ideal temperature and that the pizza stone is thoroughly heated.

Preparing the pizza base Stretch or roll the pizza dough (see page [15](#)). Transfer the base to a lightly floured pizza peel to prevent sticking.

Adding toppings Evenly distribute your desired toppings on the pizza base, leaving about a 1–2 cm/½ inch border for the crust. (Hold back

any toppings that are eaten uncooked, such as rocket/arugula or fresh ham, use these to finish the cooked pizza.)

Transferring the pizza Use the pizza peel to transfer the pizza from the work surface to the hot pizza stone in the oven. Use a quick, jerking motion to slide the pizza onto the stone smoothly.

Baking the pizza Bake the pizza for 2–4 minutes. The very high temperature of the oven allows for rapid and even cooking, resulting in a crispy crust and perfectly melted cheese. Check the pizza frequently. It is done when the crust is golden brown and slightly charred, and the cheese is melted and bubbling. Always use the pizza peel to remove the pizza from the oven and handle with care as it will be extremely hot!

useful equipment

You don't need specialist equipment, simply invest in a few good pieces of kit and you are good to go!

Stand mixer A powerful heavy-based mixer with both whisk and dough hook attachments.

Pizza dough cutter/scrapper Used to cut and lift dough, choose one with a handle that is comfortable to hold and has a rounded blade.

Heavy baking tray/sheet See page opposite.

Pizza peel (optional) See page opposite.

Scissors or a pizza wheel cutter I use sharp, long-bladed scissors to cut my pizza into slices as doing so retains the structure of the crust that is unique to Neapolitan pizza. You can use a wheel if you prefer.

Dough container An airtight container is used for proving the dough. Ideally a large lidded box that is at least 10 cm/4 inches deep to allow room for the dough to rise. You will also want it to allow plenty of space between dough balls, because they will spread out as they rest. You should also make sure it fits in your fridge for the Cold Fermentation stage (see page [14](#)).

Digital kitchen scales A good investment generally, but you will get better results if you weigh your dough ingredients, water in particular (see page [12](#) for Basic Dough), avoid measuring jugs/pitchers that give weight by volume as they are rarely accurate!

Mortar and pestle A great tool for making pesto and other sauces as well as crushing nuts and grinding spices.

Japanese mandoline Ideal for slicing foods such as vegetables very thinly, but use it carefully.

Squeezy bottles These make easy work out of drizzling olive oil or adding sauces and condiments to your pizzas as you assemble them.