

# Wine Spectator



## Pizza

## In America

**Chefs lift the humble pie to star status**  
By Harvey Steiman



**F**lames flare inside the big brick oven at Pizzeria Bianco in Phoenix as Chris Bianco toasts another quartered pecan log onto the fire. Through the shallow, arched opening, he slides a thin slab of dough sprinkled with fresh rosemary leaves and Parmigiano-Reggiano. Within seconds, the dough turns to puff in the furnace heat. At two minutes, the edges begin to darken and the cheese completely melts.



Bianco slices and serves the pizza atop a wooden board. He then adds a drizzle of olive oil and a pinch of sea salt. The pizza is served with a side of fresh basil and a glass of red wine.

## Destination Pizza

Here are some of the leading pizza joints in the United States, with pizza types noted to indicate each restaurant's specialty. Definitions for the dominant pizza types are provided after the listings.

<b>Al Pizzeria</b> 2015 Ave. N., Phoenix, AZ Neapolitan 480-944-2277 www.alpizzeria.com	<b>Luca's Pizzeria</b> 2015 Ave. N., Phoenix, AZ Chicago 480-944-2277 www.alpizzeria.com	<b>Domino's</b> 1000 N. Central Expy., Phoenix, AZ Chicago 602-955-1234 www.dominos.com	<b>Domino's Specialty Slices</b> 1000 N. Central Expy., Phoenix, AZ Chicago 602-955-1234 www.dominos.com
<b>Antonio Pizzeria</b> 1000 N. Central Expy., Phoenix, AZ Chicago 602-955-1234 www.dominos.com	<b>Domino's Specialty Slices</b> 1000 N. Central Expy., Phoenix, AZ Chicago 602-955-1234 www.dominos.com	<b>Domino's Specialty Slices</b> 1000 N. Central Expy., Phoenix, AZ Chicago 602-955-1234 www.dominos.com	<b>Domino's Specialty Slices</b> 1000 N. Central Expy., Phoenix, AZ Chicago 602-955-1234 www.dominos.com
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**A16**  
2355 Chestnut St., San Francisco  
**Telephone**  
(415) 771-2216 **Web site**  
www.a16sf.com **Pizza type** Modified Neapolitan

In this approach, Bianco is typical of modern chefs. They may prefer local ingredients, but they use them only if the ingredients are of higher quality than anything that's imported — hence the almost universal insistence on using canned San Marzano tomatoes from Italy. "I would love to use fresh California tomatoes," sighs Nate Appleman, the chef at A16 in San Francisco, "but American tomatoes are too sweet. They don't have enough acidity."

Appleman uses a fior di latte mozzarella from Gioia Cheese Co. in El Monte, Calif., not an Italian bufala mozzarella. "It tastes fresher," he explains. "It's made on Monday; we get it Wednesday. We also make our own mozzarella [at the restaurant], but not for pizza. If it's too fresh, it oozes liquid on the pizza."

Like Mangieri at Una Pizza, Appleman uses a wood-fired oven at A16 and adds wood chips to the smoldering logs. Appleman and the restaurant's original chef, Christophe Hille, developed a crust that adapts the ideal of Neapolitan pizza to American tastes. Though soft and thin, it gets a little more fire so it won't be quite so floppy. After some experimentation, A16 started making its dough three days in advance so that it could pick up a nice sour edge.

The restaurant gets creative with some of its pizzas. Aside from the best-selling Margherita and a non-cheese pie with marinara sauce and herbs called the Romana, there's the Bianca, which adds green olives and basil to a base of Grana Padano cheese and mozzarella; a roasted vegetable pizza, made on the Margherita; and a mushroom pizza, built on the Bianco, which uses fresh chiodino or honshimeji that are first roasted in the oven with olive oil.