

Father & Daughter Teaching Pizza

Tommaso Cartia (October 31, 2017)



Master pizza maker Roberto Caporuscio shares the secrets of true Neapolitan pizza as the U.S. president of the Pizza Academy Foundation (PAF)—the Neapolitan pizza school headquartered in his Kesté Wall Street. But there is another secret in the family: Giorgia, his daughter and a talented pizzaiola, is also a fantastic teacher.

[Roberto Caporuscio](#) [2]'s story is fascinating and adventurous. It's a story of passion, love, and determination that guided him from his Roman roots to Neapolitan culture, becoming a kind of adopted Neapolitan, and rising to success in the United States. All of this was lead by his passion for pizza and Neapolitan culture, and one of its most distinctive gifts: pizza.

An American Adventure

After working in Naples with master pizza makers such as Don Gennaro Capatosta, [Antonio Starita](#) [3] and Enzo Coccia, Roberto arrived in the United States in 1999 and began working as a pizza



maker in Pittsburgh, making authentic Neapolitan pizza. It was a gamble at a time when Americans were used to the taste of their own and Italian-American pizza and cuisine. However, Caporuscio won his personal gamble that the taste of true Neapolitan pizza could win over Americans, and, from that point forward, he has seen resounding success.

Moving to New York, Roberto is now the owner of some of the most popular Neapolitan pizzerias in the city: Don Antonio and Kesté Pizza & Vino, which has three locations: West Village, Wall Street, and Williamsburg. He has also received wide recognition for his work: “#1 Pizza in New York” by New York Magazine, “Best Pizza” in New York State by Food Network Magazine, and top 25 “Best Pizza Places in the US” by Food and Wine.

PAF - The Pizza Academy

The idea of sharing the secrets of Neapolitan pizza was always on Roberto’s mind. “The idea for the school has existed for 10 years,” he tells us. “We had our first student in 2007 in Madison, Wisconsin. From there, the [Associazione Pizzaiuoli Napoletani](#) [4] (Neapolitan Pizza Makers Association) asked me to educate people here in America and to show Americans what true Neapolitan pizza is.”

Little by little, the master pizza maker began teaching students, like [Mark Dym](#) [5] in Denver, who today has four pizzerias there. Soon after the opening of Don Antonio and Kesté, Roberto’s teaching and advising was concentrated in New York, and he taught almost 200 students. The students received certifications and are now successful pizza makers.

Recently, Roberto’s daughter, Giorgia, a young and extremely talented pizza maker, joined in and began teaching. And her father proudly confesses, “She’s even better than me at teaching!” Roberto and Giorgia’s dream was to find a physical space that was equipped to host a real school. They found such a space downtown, in which they opened Kesté Wall Street. The largest room in the restaurant lent itself perfectly to hosting the school—inside of a real pizzeria. Students could then have the opportunity not only to learn how to prepare a Neapolitan pizza but also how to work with the right ovens and in a professional kitchen, a chance to understand how a pizzeria works and how it should be run. As Roberto emphasizes, “This school is dedicated both to teaching amateurs and to training chefs, but companies also come for team building. We also teach how to make pizza to children who are looking to have fun.”

What the school does

The opening of the Pizza Academy Foundation saw the collaboration of various sponsors like [Caputo](#) [6], Ciao, [Belgioioso](#) [7], and [Urbani Truffles](#) [8]. Inside, there’s also a beautiful bar, which may be used to teach how to prepare true Italian cocktails.

Seaside Communication, which collaborated on the project, advised Roberto to livestream the lessons from Kesté Wall Street. “This allows us to conduct lessons online, streaming through our website, and it allows us to be present outside the United States... We’ve already been able to reach Australia, South Africa, Berlin, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Santo Domingo,” he says enthusiastically.

Caporuscio feels it’s important to teach not only how to cook a perfect Neapolitan pizza but also to teach what a true Neapolitan pizzeria should feel like, beginning with decor and interior design. For Kesté Wall Street, Roberto was inspired by a classic book about the Neapolitan lifestyle in the 1800s, [Usi e costumi di Napoli e Contorni Descritti e Dipinti by Francesco De Bourcard](#) [9]. It describes a traditional Neapolitan pizzeria, and gave Roberto his inspiration. “I recreated that atmosphere here thanks to the Neapolitan architect Roberto Iuliano. I photocopied the pages and gave them to him. This is how he decided to recreate that rustic environment.”

Roberto adds, “Something important that we always explain during the lessons is that a restaurant’s environment needs to match the product that you sell. It needs to respect the food that you serve and its traditions. Neapolitan pizza can’t be presented in a modern place, especially in the eyes of Americans.”

Neapolitan pizza secrets

“First of all, Neapolitan pizza requires an artisan who knows how to make it, the pizza maker,” Caporuscio says. “It’s an art that must be learned, from the dough to the oven, the temperatures, the cooking times, and the ingredients. Neapolitan pizza can be prepared only with Caputo flour, either 0 or 1. The dough needs to be made with a small amount of yeast, fermented for a long time,



and with the right amount of salt. After this, the most important part is the kneading. It needs to be soft and fluffy but also elastic. It must be able to be eaten with your hands, and the ingredients must not slide off. Mozzarella, tomato, and extra virgin olive oil are obviously the main ingredients. It should be made in a wood-burning oven and cook for approximately 90 seconds.”

The school also teaches how to make Roman pan pizza and American pizza with a class run by Michele Ameglio, a world-champion of pizza. Still, while Roberto is open to various interpretations of pizza, he argues that “Neapolitan pizza is either Neapolitan or it’s not. If not, we risk it becoming like spaghetti and meatballs, which is the big problem that Italian gastronomy had in America. This is why it’s important to educate and teach the timeless tradition of true Neapolitan pizza. This a fundamental mission of my work.”

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