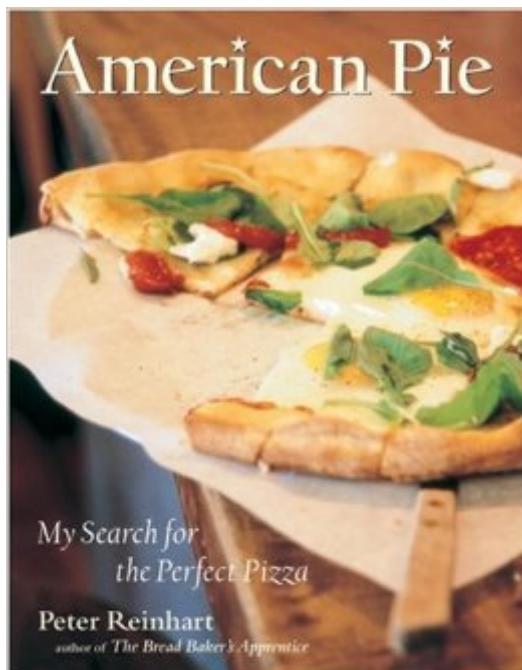


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American Pie: My Search For The Perfect Pizza



Synopsis

On the subject of pizza, there is never a shortage of opinions. Allegiances run from the general (Chicago versus New York style, Neapolitan versus Roman) to the particular (Pepe's versus Sally's, Gino's East versus Pizzeria Uno), and new interpretations ever extend the pizza frontier. In *AMERICAN PIE*, master bread baker Peter Reinhart follows the trail from Italy to the States, capturing the stories behind the greatest artisanal pizzas of the Old World and the New. Beginning his journey in Genoa, Reinhart scours the countryside in search of the fabled focaccia col formaggio. He next heads to Rome to sample the famed seven-foot-long pizza al taglio, and then to Naples for the archetypal pizza napoletana. Back in America, the hunt resumes in the unlikely locale of Phoenix, Arizona, where Chris Bianco of Pizzeria Bianco has convinced many that his pie sets the new standard in the country. The pizza mecca of New Haven, grilled pizza in Providence, the deep-dish pies of Chicago, California-style pizza in San Francisco and Los Angeles—“these are just a few of the tasty attractions on Reinhart's epic tour. Returning to the kitchen, Reinhart gives a master class on pizza-making techniques and provides more than 60 recipes for doughs, sauces and toppings, and the pizzas that bring them all together. His insatiable curiosity and gift for storytelling make *AMERICAN PIE* essential reading for those who aspire to make great pizza at home, as well as for anyone who enjoys the thrill of the hunt. A fascinating look into the great pizzas and pizzerias of Italy and America. Peter Reinhart's last book, *THE BREAD BAKER'S APPRENTICE*, was named Cookbook of the Year by both the James Beard Foundation and the International Association of Culinary Professionals. *Reviews* “Peter Reinhart has taken a deep look into pizza, one of the best and simplest of foods, embracing all its variety. He probes American pizza especially, but he has tasted the original in Naples and visited elsewhere in Italy to learn about variations and relatives. He tells vivid stories, and his recipes and techniques are thorough and practical. A splendid book.” Edward Behr, editor, *The Art of Eating* *“el doubt whether anyone else could be as passionate as Peter Reinhart about pizzas or have made such extensive and exciting journeys in pursuing them. He has collected great anecdotes and wonderfully detailed recipes in the course of his intercontinental hunt.”* Alan Davidson, author of *The Oxford Companion to Food* *“We all know that Peter Reinhart is a great baker and teacher, but now that he's fallen in love with pizza, we can see he's also a great tour guide as he takes us to the best pizzerias in Italy and America. Secrets are divulged, expert tips provided, and stories told. Much more than a collection of recipes, this is a book that is as fun to read as it is to bake from.”* Carol Field, author of *The Italian Baker*

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Customer Reviews

I bought this book, having never seen it before, because of my appreciation for author Peter Reinhart's other excellent works, as well as a desire to make good pizza of my own. I have Bread Baker's Apprentice and Crust & Crumb, and because these books are specifically about bread, I assumed that American Pie would be all about the crust. This was a gross misconception on my part; this book is much more than a tome on pizza crust. The book has two sections. The first is a fascinating account of all Reinhart went through to find what he regards as the perfect pizza. This includes details of a trip to Italy as well as places within the United States where he found excellent pizza on his pilgrimage. The second, larger section deals with the recipes (formulas) he has created, and this section is broken down further into three sections -- dough, toppings and sauces, and finally complete pizzas. Do yourself a favor -- do not skip the first section and plow right into the recipes and formulas. While you may be more interested in getting down to business, you learn a tremendous amount about what the author regards as a great pizza, and more importantly, you learn just how serious the author was when he set out to find what he calls the perfect pizza. As is typical of his other works, Reinhart writes with unwavering passion, pouring everything he's got into the writing. Finally, many of the pizzas he mentions in the first section are recreated in recipe form in the second section, and it's really fascinating to recreate one of the pies in your own kitchen. The dough section is a collection of approximately a dozen excellent formulas for crust. Each recipe sticks to Reinhart's trademark method -- slow rise, usually an overnight rising.

My search for making good pizza at home began with THE ART OF MAKING PIZZA by Dominick

DeAngelis. I gave the book a good review, but since reading Reinhart's AMERICAN PIE, I have to say, unless you just don't have the extra money for this book, skip THE ART and get AMERICAN PIE. You may find that AMERICAN PIE is the only pizza book you need. Comparisons against THE ART are difficult for me to avoid. DeAngelis basically instructs on making one style of pizza - what Reinhart would call a New York style or Americana. Reinhart teaches you to make Napoletana pizza, New York style pizza, Americana pizza, Roman style (thin crust) pizza, grilled pizza (Yes! It's what it sounds like!), Chicago deep dish pizza and a few breads that you may not consider pizza at all, like pita, carta di musica and focaccia. DeAngelis INSISTS that you need to use high-gluten flour (good luck finding it locally) and complains of the inadequacy of the home oven. Reinhart uses (mostly) available ingredients and writes the book knowing that it's going to be used within the limitations of a home kitchen. But until recently, I've had problems with the recipes. I've tried the Napoletana crust, the Americana crust, the focaccia, the carta di musica, and the prebaked crusts. Despite following his recipes (nearly) to a "T," the dough just did not act as described in the book. It was not as elastic as described, and could tear apart from its own weight. Despite this, if I could get the dough formed into a crust at all, the results were still pretty good! There are two pages on "Ten Tips for Making Pizza Dough." These may be the two most valuable pages in the book, and should be expanded and not relegated to the reduced type size. The recipes call for "instant yeast."

I'm sure there are other books devoted to the pizza, but this is the one which all true foodies will want. For starters, it's written by Peter Reinhart, a major American authority and writer on bread baking. Then, there are connections in the story to culinary luminaries such as Alice Waters, Wolfgang Puck, Mario Batali, Rick Bayless, Paul Bertolli, and David Rosengarten. The first half of the book is a quest to find the best American pizza, after an incident in Reinhart's home town of Philadelphia when he has a pie from a fondly remembered local restaurant, and it simply does not come up to his fond memories of the pizza of days gone by. As one would expect, the quest begins by a visit to sample the pizzas of Italy in Genoa, Florence, Rome, and Naples, the legendary home of the pizza archetype. Upon returning home, the author and his wife visit famous pizza locations in New York City, New Haven, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Phoenix. In case the Food Network has not caught onto this fact yet, some of the very best pizza is made at Pizzeria Bianco by Chris Bianco, a James Beard Best Chef of the Southwest award winner. The author is not so gauche as to make a pronouncement on the best pizza in the country, but comes to the conclusion that a local 'best' is the conjunction of a perception of what the best pizza should be and a very good pizzaioli who can produce a pie to meet those expectations. One of the most difficult problems for

maintaining a good pizza in the U.S. is keeping a dedicated pizzaioli at work at that position and not to treat the job as just another station for a chef to master and move on. Even food meccas like Chez Panisse have problems keeping up the quality of their crusts in the face of staff rotation.

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