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SALT MEATS CHEESE: PIZZA MAKING CLASS – SYDNEY

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The Italians behind Salt Meats Cheese are sharing their pizza-making secrets with grateful Aussie foodies.





You may not realise it, but what you've grown up thinking of as "pizza" would be regarded as a Frankenstein's monster by many self-respecting Italians. Of course, that's of no great concern to the punters whose idea of good cuisine is shovelling a family sized meatlovers with cheeseburger-stuffed crust down their gullet, but for the authenticity-prizing foodies of Sydney's Inner West, there's now the option of learning to make one of those thin based, sparingly topped, melt in your mouth creations they remember from their last trip to the Venice Biennale.



Salt Meats Cheese, the providore at the gourmand Mecca that is The Grounds, which has already been running ravioli and mozzarella-making classes, has now added pizza to the syllabus. Book a class (for \$89) and you'll get to resolve the mystery of how to make a pizza base at home that actually tastes good.



Upon arrival you're handed an apron and told to grab a spot at a long table festooned with mixing bowls and containers full of flour, salt, sugar and water (a bit of yeast and olive oil comes later). First off there's a history lesson (flat breads have been around forever but the pizza as we know it today was invented when Neapolitan tavern owner Raffaele Esposito threw some ingredients the colour of the Italian flag (tomatoes, mozzarella and basil) on some flat bread to create a dish in honour of a visiting royal, Queen Margherita of Savoy.



Next, the miked-up MC explains how to mix the ingredients together while Director Stefano De Blasi and professional pizza makers Alessandro and Michele provide good-natured assistance. Once the ingredients have been combined it's time to do some kneading. Actually, make that a lot of kneading, an activity that soon becomes oddly therapeutic, sort of like getting to revert to childhood and muck around with Play-Doh. After one of the prowling experts has judged your cricket-ball-sized dough sphere sufficiently airless and shiny, it's time to flatten it in a circular manner. Suffice to say, this is nowhere near as easy as it looks in films and it's highly unlikely you'll be merrily hurling disks of dough through the air.

Finally it's time to choose your toppings, put your masterpiece in the wood-fired oven and button-hole one of the Italian chefs with any last culinary queries before sitting down to what will quite likely be the most *delizioso* pizza you've ever eaten, washed down with a glass of red or Italian beer.

By Nigel Bowen

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