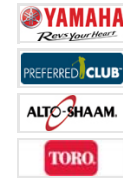


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### A Piece of the Pie

By Joanna DeChellis | January 5th, 2015

Pizza offers endless flexibility, variety and mass appeal.

When Greensboro (N.C.) Country Club (GCC) decided to build an outdoor bar and dining facility near its pool area—complete with a wood-fired hearth oven—the staff didn't really know what to expect.

"It was a leap of faith," says General Manager Steve Matlaga.

But that leap turned out to be a game-changing addition to GCC's food-and-beverage operation—one that increased usage and sales in a very short time.

"The project cost \$420,000," says Matlaga. "The revenue from Memorial Day to Labor Day was \$191,000. Plus, in the first two months, 97% of our traffic was new business."

While that percentage dropped slightly in August and September, when 80% of the tickets represented new business, the fact remains: The hearth oven—and the pizzas coming out of it—have added a valuable new culinary element to GCC's \$3.3 million F&B operation.

#### Setting Up Shop

GCC's specialty pizza menu changes frequently, but the classics and the build-your-own options are always available.

"Some of our most popular pizzas are chicken, sausage and fennel; sweet-chili duck; pork belly and pimento cheese; and a smoked chicken and goat cheese," says Executive Chef Gregory John.

GCC keeps its oven, which uses wood and gas to maintain a more consistent temperature, between 680°F and 720°F.

"Pizzas cook in four or five minutes, depending on the toppings," says John.

#### Part-time Pizzeria

At Montecito Country Club (MCC) in Santa Barbara, Calif., pizza is also prepared outdoors in a rented pizza oven.

"It's much more cost-effective, because we don't have to maintain or house [the oven]," says Executive Chef Michael Blackwell, who starts warming the wood-burning oven three or four hours before service.

MCC runs the oven much hotter than GCC, at between 800°F–850°F. This cooks pizzas incredibly

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*Before opening the new facility, GCC's Executive Chef Gregory John and Chef de Cuisine Alex Pierce experimented with different dough recipes, until they discovered the perfect crust.*



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quickly—sometimes as fast as one minute.

“You have to be really careful when you’ve got it that hot,” says Blackwell. “If you’re not watching the pizza cook, it’ll burn in the blink of an eye.”

#### Top It Off

At Ogden (Utah) Country Club, pizzas are prepared in the back of the house in a traditional deck oven, instead of outside. “It’s nothing fancy,” says Jason Talcott, Executive Chef. “But it gets the job done well.”

Talcott uses a sourdough starter that he brought with him to the club when he took his position at Ogden CC in 2014.

“It’s all organic,” he says. “We don’t use processed sugar to feed it. We use agave instead.”

The result, he explains, is crisp, yet tender dough.

“There are a lot of bargain pizza places in this area,” Talcott notes. “We differentiate ourselves by offering artisan pies made with high-quality ingredients.”

As such, Ogden CC runs a fairly high food cost on its pizzas, as Talcott wants members to view this menu item as exclusive and proprietary.

“We make our own sauce and use local meats and cheeses,” he says.

Some of Ogden CC’s most popular pies include an all-meat version, which features pepperoni, capicola and sopressata; a squash pizza that features a hazelnut and nutmeg sauce and is topped with caramelized onions; and a buffalo chicken “mac & cheese” pizza.

Ten-inch pies run between \$9 and \$14.

“Members are getting more and more creative with their topping choices, too,” says Talcott. “It has helped them to feel more connected to the kitchen.”

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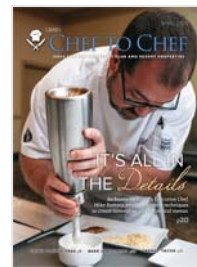
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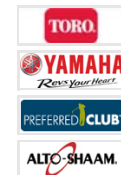
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