

The Pizza Maker Star

Tommaso Cartia (April 06, 2018)



Discover the story of Master Pizzaiolo Tony Gemignani, from his Italian upbringing to acclaimed World Pizza Champion. His San Francisco pizzeria offers 13 different styles of pizza and hosts The International School of Pizza.

Pizza making is an art that, like painting, sculpting, opera, and craftsmanship, is definitely embedded into Italians' DNA. And the immigrants, who during the war embraced the American dream to find a better life, brought those incredible talents with them. That's certainly the case of the Gemignani



family. Originally from Gombitelli (a small village close to Lucca, Tuscany), the Gemignanis settled in Fremont, California, where the young Tony grew up. He was surrounded by 84 acres of apricots and cherries farmed by his Italian father and grandfather. He also watched his mom work her magic in the kitchen, cooking traditional Italian recipes.

From Student to World Pizza Champion

The seed of what has become Tony's success with Italian cooking and pizza making was planted in that rural paradise. Always driven by a strong passion and commitment to his goals in life, Tony realized that being a chef was his calling, so he went back to basics, to the source. Twelve years ago, he moved to Italy to study at the prestigious [Scuola Italiana Pizzaioli](#) [2], situated in Caorle close to Venice. The professional school teaches the profession of the pizzaiolo, and it has branches all over the world, including in the USA, where courses are taught by Gemignani himself.

The combination of both an education and an innate talent brought Tony to become one of the most awarded and successful pizzaiolos in the world. He's a pizza throwing star and a twelve-time [World Pizza Champion](#) [3]. He won his first competition in Las Vegas and eventually became president of the Championship. Gemignani is the only Triple Crown winner for baking at the International Pizza Championships in Lecce, Apulia, and he was even the first American and non-Neapolitan to win the coveted World Pizza Cup in Naples in 2007.

Tony's Pizzeria Napoletana

It's no wonder that when Tony started his own business in San Francisco, he set the bar high in order to eliminate all competition. [Tony's Pizza Napoletana](#) [4] is his flagship restaurant, and throughout the years, it became SF's pizza kingdom. Ever since it opened its doors, the pizzeria has received nothing but high praise from locals and critics alike. Tony prides himself on continuing the tradition he grew up with; he uses only the freshest ingredients grown on his rooftop garden, and he supports both local organic farmers and artisan cheese makers.

The restaurant concept is grandiose, offering all of the styles of pizza you could ever dream of tasting. "We have seven ovens with 13 different styles of pizza," Tony told us. "Besides the Napoletana, we have NY-style pizza by the slice, pizza romana, grandma pizza, and Sicilian pizza. We also have some original styles like the St. Louis and the Detroit. Depending on the style that you order, we use the appropriate flour and tomatoes, and we adjust the temperature of the oven."

The Margherita Napoletana pizza, for example, is one of the star's of the menu and the winner of the 2007 World Pizza Cup in Naples. It's cooked at 900 degrees in a wood-fired oven and is prepared with dough kneaded by hand using Caputo red flour then proofed in napoletana wood boxes, San Marzano D.O.P. tomatoes, sea salt, mozzarella, fresh basil, and extra virgin olive oil.

Another two winning pizzas are the Sicilian La Regina—Gold Cup winner of the 2013 International Pizza Championships in Parma—made with soppressata piccante, Prosciutto di Parma, mozzarella, provola, parmigiano, piave, arugula; and the Burratina di Margherita—Gold Cup winner of the 2008 International Pizza Championships in Lecce—made with burrata, cherry tomatoes tossed with fresh basil, extra virgin olive oil, and a balsamic reduction. All the Sicilian pizzas are cooked at 550 degrees and are pan pizzas topped with vine-ripened tomato sauce and mozzarella cheese.

Gemignani shared the secret behind his pizza making artistry with us: "The secret is all about love and passion for what you do but also about balance. The marination of all the ingredients that you use and the complexity of it. It's about balance and not overly complex ingredients."

Tony's pizzeria also offers delicious traditional Italian pastas like Carbonara—linguine, farm egg yolk, pancetta, onion, parmigiano, pecorino romano, cream, and parsley; and lasagna—tomato sauce with a savory combination of ricotta, Italian sausage, mozzarella, parmigiano, and parsley.

Gemignani's Pizza Empire

Tony's Gemignani pizza empire includes several other restaurants such as Tony's Coal Fired Pizza,



which is also in San Francisco; Capo's in Chicago; and Slice House which has locations in Green Valley Ranch, NV, Walnut Creek, CA, and San Francisco. In partnership with George Karpaty and Trevor Hewitt, Tony also opened Pizza Rock in Sacramento, Las Vegas, and Green Valley Ranch. Pizza Rock is a cool conceptual space that combines the quality of Tony's pizza with a nightlife vibe. It's a place to eat but also to listen to great music, have drinks, and enjoy a night out.

[The International School of Pizza](#) [5]

As a graduate of the Scuola Italiana Pizzaioli and the first Master Instructor in the US, Gemignani coordinates and teaches the American branch of the school located in San Francisco along with The United States School of Pizza and The International School of Pizza.

The school has multiple locations and can be found at Tony's Pizzeria Napoletana, The Slice House, and Capo's. The school brings the prestigious tradition of the Scuola Italiana, which dates back to 1988, to the US. The school presents an incredible opportunity for any American student who wishes to master the art of pizza making and receive a certification.

Different courses are available like the Neapolitan and Classic Italian-style-pizza combo course, the American-style-pizza course, and the Home Chef's course, which allows everyone, not just those who want to become a professional, to learn the secrets of pizza making and to prepare it in the cozyness of their homes.

To start your course and become a certified pizza maker, check out the International School of Pizza Website for more info: [Internationalschoolofpizza.com](http://internationalschoolofpizza.com) [6]

North Beach
1570 Stockton St
(415) 835-9888

<http://tonyspizzanapoletana.com/> [7]

Cuisine: Traditional

Ambience: Casual

Price \$\$

Source URL: <http://iitaly.org/magazine/dining-in-out/article/pizza-maker-star>

Links

- [1] <http://iitaly.org/files/7jpg-4>
- [2] <http://scuolaitalianapizzaioli.it>
- [3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Pizza_Championship
- [4] <http://tonyspizzanapoletana.com>
- [5] <http://internationalschoolofpizza.com>
- [6] <http://internationalschoolofpizza.com/>
- [7] <http://tonyspizzanapoletana.com/>