



Derby Chef wins Coveted Pizza Industry Award

Competition winners announced just in time for the first National Pizza Week which takes place from 22nd – 28th November.

A chef from Derby has scooped a top prize at the annual Pizza, Pasta & Italian Food Association Awards (PAPA) for his innovative Roman style pizza creation.

Stefano Di Vita, who has been working in the pizza industry internationally for the best part of 15 years, founded The Pizza Pony with his friend Paolo Cacace, after a food intolerance set him on a search for a healthier alternative to standard pizza dough.

He wowed the panel of judges, which included celebrity chef Theo Randall, with his entry, the Multu Be, combining smoked Provola, red pepper, mushroom and smoked bacon on a flat focaccia-like Roman style thin crust. It scooped him the winning prize for the American Pan Flat Bread Roman Style Tray Category in this year's Pizza, Pasta & Italian Food Awards Pizza Chef of the Year competition.



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Each year, the country's top chefs and food product designers go head-to-head, showcasing their innovation and technical skills as they create their idea of the perfect pizza in the annual PAPA awards.

Announced just in time for the first ever National Pizza Week which begins on 22nd November until 28th November, this year's entries have been kneaded, baked and taste

tested judged by a panel of industry experts including celebrity chef Theo Randall, Chef & Restaurateur (Head Judge), Enzo Oliveri – Chef & Restaurateur, Marco Fuso – Pizza Chef and Founder of Marco Fuso Pizza Consultancy and Michael Eyre – Culinary Director, Jestic,

The event is widely regarded as the 'setting the industry standards' in the pizza world. Jim Winship, director at PAPA said:

“Winners are judged on innovation, technical ability and of course, taste, across four categories with one overall winner taking ‘best in show’. This year, the standards were extremely high, but we were delighted to award Stefano the winner in this category.

“The PAPA Awards is a calendar moment we all look forward to each year. A time when we’re always surprised and delighted by the creativity of the entrants. This year it is even more special, marking the start of our first ever National Pizza Week celebrating pizza in all its glory and giving the industry a much-needed boost.”

Talking of the award Stefano said: “Pizza is my passion. I have built a life and a business around the humble slice of pizza and since developing food intolerances many years ago have made it my mission to create healthy alternatives to pizza that everyone can enjoy. I’m absolutely thrilled to have been given this award.”

A full list of this year’s winners can be found at <https://itspizzaweek.co.uk>. For interviews or the chance for any of the chefs to cook along live please contact press@pretzelgroup.co.uk.

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For additional information, images and interview requests, please contact:

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Editors Notes:

About National Pizza Week

Taking place from 22nd – 28th November, this is the first ever National Pizza Week aiming to support the food to go industry in its comeback after restrictions.

National Pizza Week is sponsored by its members Papa John’s, Stateside Foods and Goodfella’s.

Media hub: <https://www.itspizzaweek.com/index.php/media-hub>

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Pizza Designer Biography

Stefano Di Vita – The Pizza Pony

Stefano's story started back in 2006 when he was 30 years old. He was up until then a healthy individual, but this changed after having received two vaccines (on the same day) when he was in South America. He suddenly started feeling very unwell after eating food and in particular - pizza, bread and pasta.

After six months of trying to find out the reason for his sudden intolerance and trying different diets he discovered sourdough pizza. From here on in he decided to find out more about sourdough and natural yeast and became obsessed with making healthy dough that tasted as good, if not better, than standard pizza dough. He started looking for jobs in pizzerias to build up his experience.

After working in a few different places, in 2013 he opened his own pizzeria in Italy which focused on using only natural yeast and organic flour of a selected mix including wheat, rye, barley, oat and emmer.

After five years he sold his pizzeria and went to gain more experience working alongside other pizza chef's working with wood fired ovens.

In 2020 Stefano built his first clay Neapolitan fired oven for the trailer of his new business The Pizza Pony. At 45 years old, Stefano is happy and healthy, with 14 years' experience of making good quality pizzas with fresh yeast.