

The Legend of 'Di Fara Pizza' - A Classic Italian Story

Tommaso Cartia (November 01, 2017)



The adventurous and romantic story of Domenico “Dom” DeMarco, who, in 1959 moved from Caiazzo (province of Caserta), to Brooklyn. The story of a simple man who made his historic Di Fara pizzeria into a legend.

If you enter the heart of Brooklyn from the Avenue J subway station, you’ll find yourself in a classic Jewish neighborhood, with synagogues and kosher restaurants. It’s the last place you would ever think of finding a typical Italian pizzeria. However, New York is a city of infinite surprises, of contrasts but also of cultural synthesis. And just a few steps away from the Avenue J subway station stop, you’ll find one of the city’s most venerable pizzerias, Di Fara Pizza, a place that has become legendary and in recent years an important destination for tourists and celebrities from all over the world.

The secret of this little storefront lies in the golden hands of Domenico DeMarco, a pizza maker from [Caiazzo](#) [2], in the province of Caserta, who, since opening the pizzeria in 1964, has been preparing



his classic pizzas daily.

Domenico's Story

His story is also a classic one. In 1959, Domenico left Caiazzo and followed his father, an American citizen, to the dream metropolis of New York. When he told us his story, the silence, the pauses, and his eyes, still full of youthful passion, spoke a thousand words. "My father was an American citizen, so I automatically became a citizen. I came here from the city of Caiazzo, a very old city. My family was a family of farmers. We cultivated oil, figs, and also made wine. Before moving here to Brooklyn, I lived in the town of Huntington on Long Island. I worked on a farm there."

While he was working on the farm, Domenico remembered that someone told him about the neighborhood near the Avenue J subway stop and that there were interesting opportunities there. One Saturday night, Dom went to visit the area, and he was surprised by the amount of people on the street. The place that would eventually become his pizzeria was for sale and was situated in a great location, steps from the subway entrance. Domenico already had some pizzeria experience, and he felt ready to open his own business.

Trusting the instincts that had always guided him through the important decisions in his life, he decided to take the storefront. When he opened the business, his partner's name was Farina. The two combined their names, DeMarco and Farina, and Di Fara Pizza was born. The pizzeria is the same today as it was back then, unchanged thanks to Domenico's strength, determination, and his great love for his art. "As soon as you open the door, you don't stop working until 9 at night. It's my passion, my life. I've been in business for 53 years," Domenico proudly told us.

However, pizza was not DeMarco's only love. He married an American woman who gave him wonderful children. To this day, his daughter Margaret still sticks by her father's side and helps him run the pizzeria.

"I married a very religious Catholic woman. We got married in the church. I liked her because she did her own thing, and she was reserved. It was good because as I always say, 'it's better to be alone than in bad company!'"

In addition to being a tireless pizza maker, Domenico is also a positive and friendly man. He loves life and, in particular, music, which he listens to and plays for Di Fara's customers.

"I always listen to Italian music here. I like the sound of the accordion, the tarantella, and Italian folk music. One of my favorite artists was [Enrico Caruso](#) [3], who I was able to see here in New York. I also like Enrico Fiume, who always used to come here to have pizza. My music helps me to find the right rhythm for my work. My favorite song is "Ave Maria."

Di Fara's Pizza

But what's made Di Fara so popular? It has become a must stop for tourists visiting New York. Many Italians affirm that the pizza is even better at Di Fara than it is in Italy, and celebrities have never stopped showing up, including singers [Tony Bennett](#) [4] and [Ed Sheeran](#) [5] and actor [Leonardo DiCaprio](#) [6], to name a few.

"When Italians come here to try my pizza, they tell me that they like it even more than the pizza they eat in Italy," Dom says. "I don't understand how that's possible because all of the ingredients I use for the pizza come from Italy. The Casapulla mozzarella from Caserta, San Marzano tomatoes, extra virgin olive oil. Perhaps this is the reason: I use only products of an extremely high quality. If you do what you like, if you have passion for your art, in this case the art of making pizza, the magic happens, and people like it. I like what I do, and I'm very proud of what I do."

Using ingredients of the highest quality is, of course, important. But DeMarco's skill is also key. He's able to make approximately 150 pizzas daily at a rate fast enough to cause any of the larger



restaurants to be jealous. Dom does almost everything by himself; he's helped only by a few assistants, among whom are his children.

DeMarco's prowess is not only in his extraordinary hands but also in his knowledge of cooking, of the importance of the dough and the constant search for new processes. "I always experiment with the pizza. I'm always evolving," Domenico told us.

"Before letting my clients taste a pizza, I'm always the first to try it. The dough is the most important part of the pizza, and that's where I experiment the most. Pizza shouldn't stay inside the oven for too long. I keep it in for no more than 5 minutes. If it's in there for more than 5 minutes, the taste changes radically, and it gets too dry."

Writing about the taste of this pizza is easy; you can safely say it's exquisite because that's just the truth. But it's the experience of going there to the Avenue J stop in Brooklyn, of walking into a place that seems like something out of a black and white postcard, and of seeing this man, both strong like a rock but as good as bread, knead his pizza, as he's been doing every day for fifty years... and then of eating it, allows you to taste an important part of our Italian history.

[Di Fara Pizz](#) [7]a [8]

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