

# Men's Health

## Does This Outdoor Oven Make the Best Homemade Pizza On the Planet?

Plus: If the pies are worth the \$4,500 price tag

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Men freakin' love pizza.

The USDA has studied this (your tax dollars at work!). On any given day, 16 percent of males 20 to 39 years of age will consume pizza for breakfast, lunch, or dinner, a 2014 study found. If you divide the current U.S. population in half for gender that means that roughly 161,500,000 men are going to have at least one slice of pizza today.

Given all this, maybe it won't surprise you that Lynx, a high-end grilling company, sells an outdoor, gas-powered pizza oven, for \$4,499.00. Why the crazy price tag?



Well, Lynx will tell you that, unlike your kitchen's oven, the 30" Napoli Pizza Oven can reach temperatures up to 700°F, aided by a quick-start infrared heating system.

They'll also tell you that the massive 400-square-inch pizza stone slab that's mounted on a sliding drawer allows you to cook several pizzas at once, which, of course, you will.



And they'll also try to sell you on the point that the pizzas that come out of their oven are unlike anything you've ever tasted—be it homemade or from your favorite pizzeria.

So I put their arguments to the test and, for several months, I ate a lot of pizza from the Napoli oven.

Let's start, as all pizzas do, with the crust.

The right pizza crust comes ringed with charred, flaky puffs that crackle and crunch. These blackened bits are essential to a well-made pie, as they counterbalance the natural sweetness and tang of tomato sauce.

You should only ever use fresh dough in the Napoli (I used the master recipe from *Truly, Madly, Pizza*), because popping a Boboli inside the Napoli would be like eating at McDonald's in Naples—you're missing the point.

See, I've cooked countless pies in my indoor oven—on pizza stones, on baking steels, in cast-iron skillets—but none of those methods touched the pillowy pockets produced by the Napoli.

The secret isn't all that shocking: The hotter the oven, the faster the air inside the dough rises and produces though beautiful dough bubbles. At 700°F, the Napoli cooks whole pizzas in less than five minutes, which is also why you need a pizza peel (included) and a watchful eye. The line between a char-crisp crust and a blackened failed experiment is slim.

Then there are the toppings—the fringe benefits to a fantastic crust.

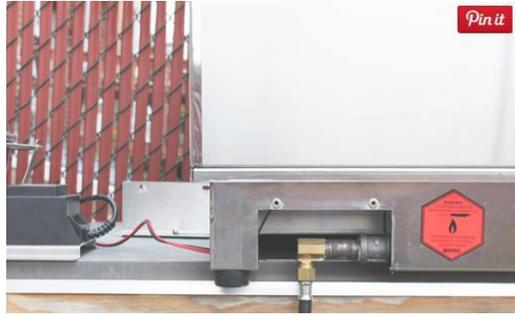
Under the high heat of the Napoli, cheese melts, bubbles, and then sings to gooey glory. Tomato sauce warms and sweetens as the natural sugars caramelize. Cured meats crisp slightly, but retain their chew. These are toppings treated to a luxury sauna, emerging their better selves.

You can attribute both the crisp crusts and luscious toppings to the Napoli's domed construction, which creates an inferno-hot foundation of direct heat from below and a more gentle, though still intense, ambient heat from above.

Yes, the Napoli produced the best damn homemade pizzas I ever tasted. But, you're wondering, "Is it worth it?" Two points to consider before you purchase...

1. You can, but shouldn't, try to light this thing manually. Doing so would require reaching inside the oven itself, gas running, to light the infrared side burners with a long-stick match. Unless you despise having eyebrows, don't do this.

This means that you are forever tied to the Napoli's electric assist start. Anyone who has ever owned an outdoor cooking device that requires an electric assist knows that, eventually, they stop assisting you. Granted, I didn't have any problems with the Napoli during my testing and may be unfairly assessing its dependability based on the past sins of other products.



2. Plunking down \$4,500 on the Napoli is a testament to your commitment to pizza. For hypothetical purposes, let's take a Margherita pizza from Pizzeria Vetri, Philadelphia's Neapolitano pizza spot. That pie there costs \$14.

You would have to order 321 of those pizzas over the course of your life—not counting the money you'd pay for ingredients or gas (or sunshine or satisfaction you derive from cooking outside). That's 1,926 slices, or roughly \$2.34 a slice.

If you find that number ridiculous, you're best off sticking with your oven or, heck, delivery. But if that seems like a totally reasonable amount of money to pay for incredible pizza, well, go ahead and burn that money.