

THE NATION'S NEWSPAPER

USA
TODAY

NO. 1 IN THE USA

1 great pizza parlors

Alabama

Pizzeria chef-owner James Lewis spent months in Naples studying pizza. The secrets he imported to **Neapolitan**—sage, fresh ingredients, the right low-yeast, low-sugar flour, and a 520/530 Neapolitan-made oven that bakes white oaks at 850 degrees. At temps that high, the thin-crust pizza cooks evenly in 10 minutes, ensuring a perfectly singed crust and ingredients—including prosciutto and fresh mozzarella—that retain their integrity. “Everything about our pizza is alive,” Lewis says. “The toppings, the bread, the taste.” 2902 2nd Ave. S., 35217-5409

—Recommended by Stephanie Conaldi, Southern Living magazine

Alaska

A loaded, hand-topped pizza called the **Alaskan**—toppings include herbaceous sauce, bacon, blackened chicken, prosciutto, and cheese, and a creamy cheese sauce—is a belly-buster at **Moore's South Pub and Pizzeria** in Anchorage. Try to resist the about 1,000 calories while chomping. 3300 Old Seward Highway, 99515-2637. moorepizza.com

—Recommended by Sarah Ables, Alaska magazine

Arizona

The King himself would be dancing in his blue suede shoes after a bite of the cheesy pizza at the **Velvet Elvis in Patagonia**. With garden-fresh ingredients and gourmet toppings like smoked Gouda and herb cream cheese, it's no wonder Elvis died in this pizza joint in the middle of nowhere. Grab a slice, or for more adventure with pizza like the **Good, Bad and the Ugly**, Southwest Drive, or El Mariachi Blanco. If you really want to test the jalapeño rock, try the **Ice Queen** deep-dish pizza, which has been ordered 24 times in all. 2922 N. 2nd Ave., 85004-2602

—Recommended by Brian Sewell, executive producer/host of Arizona Highway television

Arkansas

Arkansas has very own pizza chain, **U.S. Pizza Co.**, with 10 statewide locations, including **Little Rock**, has been serving the same good pizza since 1972. Since the start, it has had a unique recipe for thin-crust pizza cooked in an old-fashioned stone hearth oven. Main location: 2730 N. Highway Blvd., 72019-0932; 501-693-2988; uspizza.com

—Recommended by Terry Ross, travel writer, Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism

California

At **Pizzeria Pico in Larkspur**, ingredients come from local farms, mozzarella is hand-pulled in house, and you can get proprietary **avocado salad** paired on any pizza. Plus, crusts are exceptionally flavorful. Mario Rossi, no slouch in the pizza department, once delivered Pico's best pizza in the country to the **Caravaggio**, with homemade sausage and roasted red peppers and root onions. 316 Magnolia Ave., 455-942-8600; pizzierapico.com

—Recommended by Margy Truitt, food editor, Sunset magazine

Colorado

At **Virgil's Pizzeria Napoletana** in Lakewood and Littleton, Naples-born owner Virgil Urbani makes a slice that's whole—you can fold it and eat it on the street, it's cooked in gas ovens, so the crust is light and puffy on the edges. He also uses whole-milk mozzarella. The pizza is **Neapolitan**, but it's worth the trip just for the garlic knots—bits of pizza dough dipped in garlic and marinated sauce. 7906 W. Alameda Ave., Lakewood, 303-983-7777 and 8001 N. San Juan Vista Drive, Littleton, 303-472-0071; virgilspizza.com

—Recommended by John Landwehr, owner of the food stand from the *Grub*

NEO OLIVELLA'S PIZZA RECIPE: USA TODAY'S ONE AND ONLY CHOICE FROM THE GREAT STATE OF TEXAS

Texas

At **Olivella's in Dallas**, a tiny spot next to Southern Methodist University, you can get a fancy, wood-oven pizza done up with arugula, pears and blue cheese. Or you can get one with these amazing Italian meats—prosciutto, pancetta, and cold cuts you don't see often. Prices can be a smidge higher than in other places, but happy-hour deals mean you can get Neapolitan-style, crispy-crust pies for a bargain in mid-afternoon.

NEO

PIZZA NAPOLETANA

BY OLIVELLA'S

2340 Victory Lane @ High Market

