

P I Z Z A

Pizza wars are heating up in cities around Australia. Here's our pick of those with the winning edge. By **Jo McKay**.

82

PARTY DISCS

At Lazerpig (lazerpig.com.au) in Melbourne's Collingwood, it's all about the crust: the sourdough culture has been on the go for five years and all dough proves for 72 hours before making its way to the wood-fired oven. The result? A blistered, chewy base with a satisfying crunch and char at the edge. Expect great tunes here, too, particularly when the disco balls and lasers get going. As the website says, "Eat pizza, dance for ages!"

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The Italian job

Via Napoli (vianapoli.pizzeria.com.au) has such a lively vibe that you could almost be in Italy – via Sydney's Lane Cove, Hunters Hill or Surry Hills. The pizzas, too, are super-authentic, adhering to Neapolitan regulations. If you're dining with a large group (or you like to take home leftovers) opt for the one-metre version.

84

Triple threat

Tony Tomatoes (tonytomatoes.com.au) in North Adelaide has a vibrant atmosphere, confident service and a smart menu that covers all bases. Three types, in fact: 72-hour-proved white-flour classic, *superleggera* (super-light) wholemeal and housemade gluten-free. The Roman-style pizzas come out of the oven thin and crisp. As for the toppings, Tony Pepperoni is a crowd-pleasing classic.

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SLICE OF HEAVEN

Kingston newcomer Agostinis (agostinis.com.au) has the largest pizza oven in Canberra and dishes up seriously good Roman-style pie. They know it, too: a pink neon sign on the wall reads, "You had me at pizza." Ain't that the truth?





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Master maker

Johnny Di Francesco, from 400 Gradi (400gradi.com.au) in Brunswick, knows a good pie. His margherita has won the top honour at the World Pizza Championship in Italy. Made to strict Neapolitan guidelines, his pizzas have a thin base, an airy crust and traditional toppings. "We focus on quality... and the end result is incredible," he says. No wonder Melburnians call him Mr Pizza.

SAY CHEESE

Tania Nicolo and Ryan Bookless decided to call their Wembley eatery Monsterella (monsterella.com.au) because that's how their daughter, Mila, said mozzarella when she was two. But this sweet story isn't what draws the crowds to the Perth pizzeria; it's the family-friendly vibe, the focus on fresh ingredients and the parade of just-crisp rounds from the wood-fired oven.

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88

PIECE OF THE ACTION

Sourdough bases, allowed to rise for 48 hours, hand-stretched and finished with traditional and contemporary ingredients, make Justin Lane Establishment (justinlane.com.au) the pinnacle of pizza on the Gold Coast. The Burleigh Heads pizzeria's most popular? The seafood combo with prawns and calamari – perfect for the beachy location.

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STAR OF THE SOUTH

With a rustic, industrial feel, communal tables and witty names such as Porkipine and Joe Formaggio, Local Pizza (localpizzas.com.au) would be at home in Sydney's Surry Hills. But you'll have to go to Berriedale in Hobart for its signature bases and inventive toppings. Be prepared to wait – it's walk-ins only and popular.