



ASSOCIAZIONE
VERACE
PIZZA
NAPOLETANA

The history of AVPN

THE IDEA

The VPN Association was founded in 1984, supported by the Chamber of Commerce, Handicrats & Industry.

Old Neapolitan pizza masters, given the spreading of fast-food chains and the large use - sometimes inappropriate- of the denomination "Original Neapolitan Pizza", decided to found an association based on a protocol in order to protect and increase the value of the pizzas produced and processed according to the old Neapolitan traditions and customs.

THE FOUNDATION

Thus, in June 1984, Antonio Pace decided to put in writing his idea and set precise rules for the preparation and processing of "veraci" (original) pizzas. As far as the protocol, he was supported by the experience of old pizza masters. In an interview published in the "Corriere della Sera", he stated: "We are fighting nobody, we just want to affirm our ancient traditions. We are against the cultural and commercial deformation of our pizza and against its industrialization; in fact, the ready-to-eat and frozen pizzas sold in supermarkets have nothing to do with the original ones." Vincenzo Pace is the President of the Association, father of Antonio, and he has been working at pizza ovens since he was eleven years old. He states: "The pizza secret lies all in the dough rising. Its recipe? It doesn't exist and I can tell you that, because I've learnt since I was a child that dough rising changes according to the weather, hot or cold, dry or damp. For instance if it's cold, you need hot water and a little salt; if it's hot you need less salt since it slows down the rising. These issues must be taken into consideration the night before, when preparing the dough. Ten to twelve hours are needed for a perfect rising. You can standardize the process, but it is the experience that refines the art".

Antonio Pace is the director and the promoter of this initiative. He is following his father's footsteps and he is supported by the manager of the technical committee, Antonio Aversano who is the owner of a popular Neapolitan restaurant: "Don Salvatore". Lello Surace, owner of the famous "Mattozzi" in P.za Carità is the secretary: all together they make a nice and heterogeneous group of operators, with the pizza ideal in their blood.

At the beginning, there were just twenty members, among which "Ciro a Santa Brigida", "Salvatore alla Riviera di Chiaia" with the pizza-master Salvatore Jossa, "Salvatore a Mergellina", "Lombardi" in Santa Chiara, "Ciro" at Borgo Marinari, "Il Ragno d'Oro" in Vomero, "Pizzeria Alba" in Piazza Immacolata", "Capasso" at Porta S. Gennaro, "Cafasso" in Via Giulio Cesare, "Mattozzi" in Piazza Carità.... In other words, the best of Neapolitan traditional pizzerias. Later, many others



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joined in, among which: “Trianon” in Via Pietro Colletta, “Umberto” di Via Alabardieri, “Cantanapoli” in Via Chiatamone, “Gennaro” a Bagnoli, “La Notizia”, “La Caraffa”, “Gaetano” in Ischia... as well as hundreds of other pizza-restaurants located in Italy and in the rest of the world.

THE DEVELOPMENT

Among other initiatives the Association runs training courses for pizza masters, and has set up a technical committee that examines the visual and organoleptic characteristics of the products. Such committee must also verify if new members procedures comply with the ones established in the protocol. Besides, a “Pizza’s fan club” will be set up; this is an external control body, made of Association of supporters and consumers verifying that all rules are respected; in case of infringements it is responsible for denouncing them to the technical committee; this might result in the expulsion of the member from the Association.

So, one event after the other, the Association gets to 1989 when the pizza Margherita centenary is celebrated with lots of meetings, ceremonies and conferences highlighting the “Margherita” celebration. The expression “Pizza D.O.C.” (Certificate of Origin) starts to be mentioned and in February a meeting is held at the Hotel Excelsior in Naples, called: “A D.O.C. certification for the Neapolitan pizza”.

The need to establish rules and regulations and to protect the quality and the authenticity of pizza is felt more and more; in fact, the pizza is recognized to be a highly promotional mean for Italy and for Naples throughout the world. Antonio Pace stated: “Too often a bad course is passed off as our Neapolitan speciality. Too often the consumer is deceived, that’s why we suggest to set up regulations”.

Yet, the centenary reaches its climax in November 1989 when the Association together with A.p.e.s. –Pizza-makers & Similar Association- organizes a worldwide conference for pizza-makers. That takes place in the Galleria Umberto I, in Naples, which is transformed for the occasion in a opened up pizzeria, showing debates, assemblies, galas, TV links and serving free pizzas for everybody. In this occasion, the Association started a subscription for the restoration of the 14th century wooden Christ, located on the high altar of Santa Chiara Church. “We thought that was the best way to celebrate our pizza fest. Not only have we increased the members number, but we’ve also grown in sensibility. We are very proud of this” stated President Pace. After the election of Bassolino as Naples mayor in 1993, the idea of regulating the “Verace Pizza Napoletana”, and the setting up of a quality certification to be issued only for pizza-makers who respect the Neapolitan tradition, was brought up again.

In 1995 a meeting was held in Castel dell’Ovo, in Naples. During the works Bassolino appointed a commission of experts to set up a “regulation code for pizza making”. It was going to be examined by the experts committee and chaired by Carlo Mangoni -lecturer of Nutrition Physiology at the Second University of Medicine and Surgery of Naples- and counting four more experts. They start to think about setting up a foundation formed by the VP Association and by local institutions such



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as the Town Hall, the Campania Region and the Province governments. Starting from the set up of a regulations code, the foundation was going to promote all the initiatives aiming at protecting this traditional Neapolitan specialty. The enthusiastic assent of the Council establishing the creation of an expert committee, encouraged the codification of the rules.

Finally, on 1st July 1997, the Mayor of Naples and the Association submitted the Protocol for VPN to the Trademark and Patents Office of the Chamber of Commerce in Rome. The manual is written by a committee of experts. It is basically just a scientific re-elaboration by prof. Mangoni and the President of the Association, of the rules list established by the old Neapolitan pizza-makers back in 1984. It is the first official step aiming to obtain the D.O.C. certification.

The official D.O.C. certification is presented at the international meeting held on 15 September 1997 in Maschio Angioino in Naples. Besides the protection of a local specialty, the certification represents the promotion of the Campania region food producers. In fact, the protocol establishes that only Campania products must be used, i.e. extra-virgin olive oil, buffalo mozzarella cheese and San Marzano tomatoes.

The natural development of such rules is represented, in 2004, by the presentation of the S.T.G. - Guaranteed Traditional Speciality- "Pizza Napoletana" protocol, protected by a European act concerning the Neapolitan pizza and ensuring that pizzas are made and processed in an artisan way. The Ministry for Agricultural Policies successfully explained and promoted the protocol at the European Committee. The "Pizzafest", at its 11th edition in 2006, represented the most important event for the VPN Association and its induced activities.

Now, the Association is more optimistic and greatly enthusiastic about the future: the path has been cut, and we will need to keep on following this long road leading to a quality pizza production.