



Humble Pie

Although it's best known as a community of ranchers and miners on the banks of the Gila River, Duncan is also home to some of the best pizza in Arizona — its faithful includes truckers who happily detour off the interstate to get their fix.

KATHY MONTGOMERY

NEARLY EVERYTHING ABOUT Humble Pie is, well, humble. The 513-square-foot building is sparsely decorated, with three picnic tables, a soda machine and a clock with a pizza face. It's almost as if owner Pete Roof put so much energy into turning out great pizza, he had nothing left over for decorating.

And great pizza it is. Located in the correspondingly small Southeastern Arizona town of Duncan, the tiny pizzeria draws customers from Silver City, New Mexico, more than an hour away. Its faithful includes truckers who happily detour off the interstate to get their fix.

Humble Pie is, in its truest sense, a mom-and-pop operation. Other than occasional appearances by their adult children, the only people you'll find behind the Dutch door that serves as a counter are Roof and his wife, Chris, who have been making pizza together for so many years, you can't tell his from hers. And that control over every pizza is the key to Humble Pie's success.

Roof learned pizza-making nearly 30 years ago, and through constant refinements, he's made the recipe his own. Mixing, balling and cold-proofing

all his dough, Roof uses olive oil (a rarity) and very little salt or sugar, plus a little stone-ground, whole-wheat flour mixed into the pizza flour.

The house-made sauce includes a proprietary blend of seasonings and a little Romano cheese. Roof also blends two whole-milk mozzarellas to get just the right balance of salt and butterfat; he grates the cheeses daily and allows them to rest, like wine. The final elements are generous portions of high-quality toppings, with produce hand-picked and "gourmet cut" into round slices for presentation.

The aptly named Not So Humble includes pepperoni, sausage, beef, mushrooms, bell peppers and black olives. Add ham, onions and green olives to get the Downright Proud. Then there's the lasagna, which customers get so gushy about, it's enough to make a person blush.

Roof initially invested in a pizza franchise based in the Phoenix area, eventually buying his partners out. Then he tired of the city and of managing employees, and he sold the business. In 1996, Roof moved his family to Duncan, a community of ranchers and miners on the banks of the Gila River.

"We really liked the area," he says. "It was quiet. It was simple." And he and Chris were done with pizza.

Then a friend told him he had a God-given gift, and that Duncan needed him. With two brothers in medicine and a daughter who aspired to law school, Roof had his doubts. His mother, a minister's wife, reassured him. "Whatever you do in life, do your best and let God do the rest," she told him.

"I was finally at peace that I'm just a pizza guy," Roof says, however humble that may seem.

DUNCAN Humble Pie, 117 Main Street, 928-359-9866