

Franco Depe

Dossier

Franco Pepe

The dough runs in Franco Pepe's DNA. His grandfather was a baker, his father was a *pizzaiolo*, and he and his brothers continued in the family business. Today, Franco is considered to be one of the best *pizzaiolos* in the world, famous for his unique dough, completely kneaded by hand, with creative ingredients that celebrate and reinvent the classical Italian recipes, and for his dedication to elevating the art of making pizza.

Together with his father, Stefano, Franco grew up in the family pizzeria, still active in the same town, Caiazzo, which represented the starting point to his entire professional career. With the experience of two generations behind him, and inspired by a new vision of pizza, in 2012 he launched his most personal project, Pepe in Grani, which features, in each variety available, the flavours of Alto Casertano.



AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

Franco has been named Ambassador of the Mediterranean Diet in the World, Ambassador of Caiazzo in the World, Ambassador of Taste, and Ambassador of the Territory. In addition, he has been recognised as Pizzaiolo of the Year by “Food and Travel”, “Pizza Awards Italy”, “The Best Chef Awards” 2021 and 2022, and Master of the Arts and Crafts of Pizza by the “Scuola Internazionale di Cucina italiana ALMA”, among others.

Likewise, his pizzeria Pepe in Grani has been awarded with three Spicchi from “Gambero Rosso” for ten consecutive years, ranked first in the European Cheap Eats list within the “Opinionated About Dining Guide 2020”, is listed as the World’s Most Voted Pizzeria in Daniel Young’s book “Where to eat pizza”, and was the first pizzeria to appear in the 50 Best Discovery within “The World’s 50 Best Restaurants” in 2019.

His pizzas have been received awards such as the “Best Pizza in Italy”, “Best Traditional Pizza”, or “Best Pizza in Campania” by Pizza Awards Italia, and, in particular, the ‘Margherita Sbagliata’ and ‘Crisommola’ have been chosen as Pizzas of the Year by Gambero Rosso, and the ‘Scarpetta’ and ‘Ananascosta’ as ‘Dishes of the Year’ by Identità Golose.



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EVENTS, PARTICIPATIONS, AND COLLABORATIONS

Since Pepe in Grani's opening date, Franco Pepe has participated in events on a global scale, such as Las Vegas Pioneer Awards (2012), Dubai Italian Cuisine World Summit (2016), Seoul Food Festival (2017), Identità Golose Coast-to-Coast New York-Los Angeles (2018), Madrid Fusión (2020 y 2022), Alimentarte Bogotá and The Best Chef Awards (2022), as well as different editions of the Congresso Internazionale di Cucina Identità Golose in Milan over the last ten years.

He has also offered pizza tastings at important events, such as the dinner for FAO and UN ambassadors at a conference on Sustainable Development in Rome in 2019, or in the occasion of the recent premiere of the chapter he stars in the series 'Chef's Table: Pizza' at Nancy Silverton's pizzeria, Mozza, in Los Angeles.

Franco has also taken part in numerous national and international interviews on radio and television, on channels such as Netflix, RAI Uno, Italia 1, Radio Capital, Gambero Rosso Channel or TV2000, among others.

He collaborates with La Filiale at L'Albereta Relais & Chateaux in Erbusco, and San Barbato Resort, Golf & Spa, in Lavello, with Proxima Franco Pepe.



The Pepe in Grani project was born with the participation of local producers and organisations from his territory. This synergy has created a new working perspective, based on the quality and authenticity of the products.

Since the opening of Pepe in Grani in a historic palace built in 1700, the historical center of Caiazzo, almost in decline at the time, it has seen a resurgence with new openings that have favoured tourism and added value to the region's microeconomics. His efforts to promote the heritage and cultural wealth of the Alto Casertano territory, as well as his contributions to the creation of the PizzaHub guide (a gastronomic and travel guide inspired by the places and products of the territory of Campania that are represented in Franco Pepe's pizzas), have earned him awards as Il Cappello d'Oro 2017.

There are many activities that testify to Franco's social commitment, highlighting the sponsorship of social centers for people with different abilities, the organisation of charity dinners, the support for projects such as Pizzas for Good, teaching children with autism or visiting communities and social integration associations. In addition, Franco participates as a speaker in renowned universities, such as Sapienza Università di Roma or the Università di Napoli Federico II.



10 YEARS OF PEPE IN GRANI

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With the experience of two generations behind him, inspired by a new vision of pizza, Franco Pepe opens Pepe in Grani, a place where experimentation, artisanal crafting, hospitality, training and placing value on the flavours and inhabitants of Alto Casertano.

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The expansion of the Pepe in Grani project begins, with an extra space to make the customer's experience even more special and two comfortable and modern rooms on the top floor, offering the possibility to stay in the same building as the pizzeria.

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The Tasting Room is inaugurated, a reserved space with three exclusive circular tables - one of which allows you to see one of the ovens in full activity through an ox's eye in the center of the table.

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Authentica is inaugurated, a private space for direct contact between the pizzaiolo and 8 guests at his table, with a wood oven exclusively for them. Known as "the smallest pizzeria in the world", this semicircular table allows to appreciate the art of elaboration of the pizzas during the tasting experience. Cooking cycles are organised in this space, together with other renowned chefs.

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The team at Pepe in Grani creates the 'functional menu', in line with the standards of the mediterranean diet, arising from the need to increase health awareness, paying attention to the right balance between macronutrients - proteins carbohydrates and lipids – and contributing to making pizza an excellent "unique dish".

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Franco Pepe receives the distinction "Cavaliere dell'Ordine al Merito della Repubblica Italiana" for his work in the field of gastronomy and contribution to increasing the richness of the territory with his project Pepe in Grani.

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During the Covid-19 pandemic, Pepe in Grani kept the oven flame burning and continued to work for the most affected sectors of the Casertan community. On the 2nd of June, the doors of the pizzeria reopened to the public, and Franco received the title "Cavaliere al Merito della Repubblica" directly from the President of the Republic, Sergio Mattarella, for his actions during the health emergency.

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The project 'Proxima' is activated, with the objective of sistemising the accumulated know-how at the Pepe in Grani in Caiazzo, through gastronomic research, a professional service, a unique design, and a strongly identity-based narrative system.

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With a team of over 40 people, Pepe in Grani celebrates its 10th anniversary with numerous journeys and projects in progress, and with full national and international recognition as center of investigation on pizza, combining tradition and innovation.



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