



Earning a Crust: Meet Sheffield's Female Pizza Entrepreneur Championing Women in the Industry

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During the first ever [National Pizza Week](#) taking place this week from the 22nd – 28th November, the organisers at The Pizza, Pasta & Italian Food Association (PAPA) are sharing the stories of 'pizza-preneurs' who are making their dough through making dough.

47-year-old Viv Durrant, founder/owner of Porter Pizza in Sheffield has a degree in philosophy and another in physiotherapy, but from a young age, she always felt that running her own pizzeria was her calling. When her youngest child went to school, it felt like the perfect time to follow her dreams....



“I've had the idea of opening a wood-fired pizza place for as long as I can remember, and now that I have, I absolutely love it. We're a small, neighbourhood pizzeria that focuses on making quality authentic Neapolitan pizza,” says Viv.

“We wanted to create a relaxed informal space that aims to feel warm and welcoming to our customers, most of whom are local regulars. Most of our business is takeaway but we've maximised the seating in our small space so that more of our customers can enjoy their pizza hot and fresh from the oven. The open kitchen was something I insisted on, so customers can watch their pizzas being made which also

adds to the intimate feel. On weekend evenings particularly, we do high volumes, and the atmosphere can be really buzzing.

Porter Pizza, so named after the Porter river that passes underneath the street close to the shop, has grown steadily and now employs around 10 staff, a mixture of full-time staff on permanent contracts and casual front of house staff. Viv, who has a hands on approach to managing the shop continued:

“We have a reliable seasonal pattern with peak sales through the summer. The Covid pandemic brought a particular increase in sales with us selling over 500 pizzas a day on some Saturdays in the summer of 2020. We'd ideally like larger premises so that we could have more seating and we wouldn't have to put so many of our beautiful pizzas into cardboard boxes, but our location is good, so we haven't moved yet. People keep asking if we're going to open a second place but as a perfectionist, I'm not sure I'm suited to remote management.”

Viv has also made it her mission to champion women in the pizza industry at every opportunity, talking of the female chefs she's employed, she said:

“Working in this industry it is very male dominated, especially the online community, no one expects to be speaking to a female pizza chef or business owner online. Being a female head chef in an all-male team definitely feels like you're smashing some barriers.

“I really love it when I get great female employees, particularly those who get really skilled on our woodfired oven as this skill in particular is one that I rarely see women doing. At one point I had a very strong set of female employees who I chose to use on our busiest weekend shifts. With five inhouse-trained women kicking out 80 Neapolitan pizzas per hour I felt extremely proud. There can't have been many pizzerias in the UK (even the world) doing that at that time.

“Pizza is simple, but it should be perfect!” Viv concludes: “It's for everybody and it's sociable. Pizza is about friendship and warmth.

“My advice to anyone looking for a career in pizza is to be brave and do it. Customers' respect and value high quality food, so there will always be a market for pizza done well. Have faith in your product but work hard to maintain that quality.”

ENDS

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Editors Notes:

About National Pizza Week

Taking place from 22nd – 28th November, this is the first ever National Pizza Week aiming to support the food to go industry in its comeback after restrictions.

National Pizza Week is sponsored by its members Papa John's, Stateside Foods and Goodfella's.

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