

## Pizza, that's Amore

Conversational Italian Instructor Professore Roberto delightfully pats his stomach when he says, "I had pizza nearly everyday when I spent a month in Naples but I must admit

I couldn't finish the meter". Pizza by the meter, or "pizza a metro" is the signature serving at the self-proclaimed "L'Universita di Pizza" the Ristorante da Gigino. Located in the town of Vico Equense outside of Naples but closer to Sorrento the "pizza a metro" is exactly that, a pizza that is one meter in length and about one-half meter in width. "The menu says one meter of pizza

will serve five people, trust me that's five hungry people". Professore Roberto also says the chefs will if you like, quarter the pizza and place different toppings on each quarter. "There are 37 different pizzas on the menu with toppings ranging from "cozze" (mussels) to "pancetta"(bacon). By the way I was only kidding about trying to eat a whole meter" he laughingly says, "but that day if it was my favorite "la margherita" it might have happened".

While the Etruscans and the ancient Romans laid the foundation, pizza as we know it took shape in Naples in the 18th century. La Margherita, which is topped with fresh tomatoes, fresh basil, and fresh mozzarella, was created and named for Margaret of Savoy the wife of Umberto I the king of Italy. "Some may argue but in my opinion Naples is the city for pizza. It's unlike what we eat here because the crust is very thin and slightly soggy in the center while the crust on the outer rim is firm. The

pizzas are also cooked in wood-burning ovens that are over 800 degrees so when you order a pizza, it comes to your plate in a couple of minutes". Professore Roberto also attests to the Italians hearty appetite by telling us that individuals will eat an

entire pizza as an appetizer!

The "calzone" which means trousers gets its name from a pair of pants that are folded over. Professore Roberto says they also are very common in Naples and are "filled with anything you can imagine, ricotta with salsiccia is my favorite". In Sicily you'll find the pizza that was introduced in America in the late 70's. "Labeling it deep-dish is somewhat accurate. I would say it's thicker than Neopolitan pizza and certainly not as plain as focaccia. In Sicily you here the name "sfincione" for their pizza. It's also very good, I believe the fresh ingredients in Italy make all the difference".

Italy's food, culture, and customs are constant topics of conversation with Professore Roberto who will begin new five-week classes, which he calls "Five weeks of Fun" in April. In Tampa the Beginners Conversational Italian Class combines "Eating Italian and Learning Italian". The fun will take place at Castellano & Pizzo Italian Gourmet Deli in Tampa on Tuesday evenings from 6-7pm beginning April 13th through May 9th. Every class will include a meal prepared by the chefs at Castellano & Pizzo. In April you can also join him for the "Five weeks of Fun" in Dunedin, Largo, St. Petersburg, and Palm Harbor. Whether you're planning a trip to Italy or interested in learning more about Italy's "Dolce Vita" he guarantees you'll enjoy yourself. Enrollment in the "Five weeks of Fun" is limited and pre-registration is required. Private lessons are also available. Contact Roberto at 727.492.6653 and visit his website at [www.learnitalian.us](http://www.learnitalian.us)