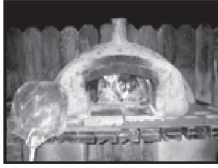


Building a Pizza Oven (Everybody Should Have One?)

by James Di Prima



The Pizza Oven.
(Photo by Jim DiPrima)

On our September, 2010 visit out to the west coast to visit my daughter Gina, and her family I was greeted by my son-in-law Alex who informed me that I was arriving just in time to help him with his latest project. At this point I said to myself it must be time to harvest the grapes and squeeze out some juice to make a barrel of wine. Boy was I wrong. That would have been easy. No, the project was to build a "Pizza Oven." My mind quickly flashed to the Regina Pizza oven on Thatcher Street. This oven was going to be huge, I thought. Hesitantly I asked, "how big of an oven are you planning to build?" "About three and a half feet in diameter and about two feet high, with an entrance in the front," he replied. He had done the research and found out what material he needed and what the forms were to look like. He had purchased them and prior to our arrival had prepared the platform on which the oven was to rest. This consisted of cinder block columns, two steel channels, running across the front and rear columns, two by six boards four feet long spanning the channels, front to rear and a 5/8 inch cement boards, cut to size to

which was added on to the top one inch of pumice stone, finally the two feet by two feet kiln brick was added centered, finished off with one by six inch red brick for dressing.

The first thing you have to do is lay out the diameter of the inside of the oven onto the kiln brick. Then apply wet sand onto the bed of two by two feet kiln newspaper to the outside of the sand form. Mix a bag of sand to a bag of fireclay. Add water to a consistency such that the mixture is soft and putty like, with your hands make a sort of brick form and apply it to the newspaper covered sand with a thickness of about two inches, starting at the base and working around and to the top. Prepare an opening for the chimney. Smooth the outside. Provide an opening of seventeen inches by a height of eight inches; this seemed like a good size for a fifteen inch pizza. This opening can be made rectangular or curved on top depending on your preference or bricks as was Alex's choice. In about two days when it has had a chance to dry and harden the sand can be removed, along with the newspaper on the inside surface. Again mix the one part fireclay with one part sand and this time add vermiculite to the mixture and apply about a two inch layer to the existing fireclay forming the bricks as stated earlier. Any newspaper remaining can be burned off when the oven is first fired up, remove all remaining sand by sweeping it out or use a vacuum cleaner to insure all the sand is removed. The final



A typical pizza oven.

step is to add a layer of Portland cement to the outside surface and allow that to dry. Now in a few days when the oven is fully dried all that remains is to clean up around the oven start a fire inside check for temperatures and mix up some pizza dough and get ready to sample some good "Italian Pizza" from the home made Pizza Oven.

As our visit came to an end the oven was quite a few days away to be completely dried. So we departed for home with the assurance that we would be back for the Christmas holidays and to try out the pizzas from the oven. September, October and November flew by and December arrived with Jean, my son Phil and I making plans to go out to San Francisco for Christmas. Needless to say my mind was on having a "PIZZA" from the oven, and of course to see the grand children, Ella and Olivia.

So on a chilly night at their home, Alex started to heat up the oven with some wood then made some pizza dough and in a short while we had some very delicious pizzas from the Pizza Oven. It was a very merry Christmas.

• The Roman Republic of 1849 (Continued from Page 8)

where an engagement demonstrated his inflexible will. A troop of Angelo Masina's mounted lancers, pursuing enemy soldiers, met a large column of cavalry. With Masina absent at another post, his untested cavaliers fled back towards where Garibaldi was watching, with the enemy in hot pursuit. So angered was the General by this that he, alongside his giant companion Aguar, sat on horseback like a statue, blocking the road. Unable to halt or turn, the cavaliers smashed into the two immovable objects, and went tumbling down, Garibaldi at the bottom. Fortunately, some young Legionnaires fighting nearby raced to the rescue. When the Neapolitan troops realized that they were in the middle of the "red devil's" troops, they fled, leaving thirty prisoners, and, with Masina's lancers pursuing, were driven up into the town of Velletri. Before even the first of Roselli's reinforcements began to show up, Garibaldi's men were laying siege to the town.

When the Commander-in-Chief arrived, however, far from rejoicing in Garibaldi's gains, he focused on the disciplinary breach in initiating battle without orders. Sulkily, he refused to attack that evening, or position troops, as Garibaldi suggested, to halt the enemy retreat. Unhindered, Ferdinand's army stole out of the southern gate of Velletri at night, and fled to safety.

Garibaldi now sensed that King Ferdinand's rule would not survive an invasion, and urged an all-out attack. It was a repeat of the French situation. Mazzini, worried about the Austrians who had just seized Bologna and were advancing towards Rome, recalled Roselli and half the army, allowing Garibaldi, undermanned, to pursue Ferdinand for the time being. Garibaldi's troops were welcomed in town after town as deliverers, crossing into Neapolitan territory at a town called Rocca d'Arce. Instead of allowing their Achilles to pursue his advantage and bring the whole of southern Italy

into the uprising (Garibaldi always believed this would have happened), however, the Triumvirs, fearing the Austrians, once again recalled him to Rome.

With no choice but to obey, Garibaldi re-entered Rome at the end of May, followed by his exhausted troops between May 30 and June 2. With Rome secure, all anticipated a long-deserved rest, but it was not to be. Neither was the strategy Garibaldi favored: guerrilla war in the mountains. As Trevelyan puts it:

Mazzini's dream was to be realized instead — the fiery martyrdom of the Republic in one supreme scene of defiance and death. (160)

For General Oudinot's reinforcements had arrived, and the treacherous siege of Rome by 30,000 French regulars was about to begin (treacherous, because on the very day de Lesseps had signed a treaty with the Triumvirs agreeing that the French would protect Rome from Austria and Naples, Oudinot was outside Rome beginning his siege.)

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Lawrence DiStasi is the author of *Mal Occhio: The Underside of Vision* (North Point Press: 1981, reprint with Afterword, 2008), *The Big Book of Italian American Culture* (Sancti Publications: 1996), and *Una Storia Segreta: The Secret History of Italian American Evacuation and Internment During World War II* (Heyday Books: 2001). For information email the author at: lwdistasi@sbcglobal.net.

VIDEO VIEWS

by Bob Morello

... more than meets the eye

S.W.A.T.: FIREFIGHT (Blu-ray-DVD) Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

(Gabriel Macht) is ordered to Detroit to train its S.W.A.T. team in the latest hostage rescue techniques. But everything changes when their botched response to a domestic dispute ends with a hostage down and a government assassin (Robert Patrick) now obsessed with terminating Cutler as well as his entire S.W.A.T. team. An action-packed thrill ride that's hard to forget! (1 hr. 29 mins.)

CLIFFORD THE BIG RED DOG: BEST BUDDIES (DVD) Lionsgate

In his first all-new DVD in two years, Clifford the Big Red Dog brings you six fun-filled adventure stories. Clifford and his friends discover the best parts of friendship are being together. They also see the importance of keeping promises, respecting each other and doing nice favors. So whether Clifford's getting a bath from Emily Elizabeth, playing tag with Cleo and T-Bone, sharing a squiggle stick with Mac, or watching fireworks, he knows the best part of best buddies, is being with the people — and dogs — he loves the most. It's fun to be red, but even more fun if you are Clifford! (1 hr. 6 mins.)

CHUGGINGTON — LET'S RIDE THE RAILS (DVD)

Anchor Bay Entertainment
Honk your horns for the new worldwide hit TV series about eager young engines, Wilson, Brewster and Koko as they learn to become working trains in Chuggington. In these six episodes the trainees find fun and excitement as they get lost in a deserted town, handle an important responsibility in the safari park, and discover that the repair shed isn't such a scary place after all. Plenty of action and laughs along the way with lessons about overcoming fear, responsibility and problem solving, and discovering social-readiness values as friendship, teamwork and courtesy! (1 hr. 2 mins.)

TYLER PERRY'S HOUSE OF PAYNE: VOL. SIX (3-DVD) Lionsgate

Hilarity's in the house when the Paynes return for more down-home togetherness and uplifting good times. Curtis "Pops" Payne is still hoping his high-spirited family will give peace and quiet a chance. However,

when son Calvin, nephew C.J. and C.J.'s fun-loving kids, Malik and Jazmine, get together under one roof. Pops will definitely have lots on his plate, luckily, his charming wife Ella has the young 'uns eating out of her hands in Volume six. Tyler Perry's inspirational comedy series includes 24 episodes of the hit television show. (8 hours)

ALL-STAR SUPERMAN (Blu-ray Combo Pack) Warner Home Video

Lex Luthor's elaborate plot to kill the Man of Steel works! Poisoned by solar radiation, Superman is dying with weeks to live, he fulfills his life's dreams — especially revealing his true identity to Lois Lane — until Luthor proclaims his ultimate plan to control the world with no alien hero to stop him. Power's fading, Superman engages in a spectacular deadly battle that could truly trigger the end of the Earth's Greatest Protector. A startling and gripping DC Universe animated original movie, stars the voice talents of James Denton, Anthony LaPaglia, Christina Hendricks and Ed Asner. Who would've thought it could ever end like that? (1 hr. 16 mins.)

FASTER (Blu-ray-DVD) Sony Pictures Home Entertainment

Following ten years in prison, Driver (Dwayne Johnson) has focused on one thing — hunting down the people responsible for brutally murdering his brother. Now a free man with a terrifying purpose, he sets out to find and kill all those on his list. But on his heels are two men who will do anything to stop him — a veteran cop (Billy Bob Thornton) and a hitman (Oliver Jackson-Cohen) who finds his match in this worthy opponent. Now, the hunter is also the hunted. Justice is swift, but vengeance is faster! (1 hr. 45 mins.)

**KYLIE: RARE AND UNSEEN (DVD)
MVD Entertainment Group**
Australian singer/actress Kylie Minogue's story is told through archive interviews and rare and unseen footage. It all began at the early age of eleven, when she achieved recognition in the soap opera *Neighbours*, before starting her recording career in 1987. Minogue's first single, "Locomotion," topped Australia's singles charts for seven weeks, before becoming the highest-selling single of the decade. Great interviews from the 80s, 90s and 2000s. (60 mins.)

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