

FRESH & HOT

EVO's portable wood-burning pizza oven's latest sensation at local farmers markets

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Made-to-order pizza topped with fresh produce from local farmers' fields and baked in a wood-burning oven is the latest, tasty find at some area farmers markets.

EVO (Extra Virgin Oven, LLC) is why.

The business was the joint idea of co-owners Ricky Hacker and Matt McIntosh. Hacker, previously sous chef at FIG restaurant, and McIntosh, previously with Normandy Farms, wanted to put their penchant for fresh produce and cooking experience to use in a new kind of way.

McIntosh took a class in Minnesota several years ago where he learned



HOLLY HERRICK/STAFF

Freshly assembled pizzas come hot out of EVO's wood-burning oven, ready to eat, in just minutes.

See EVO, Page 5D



HOLLY HERRICK/STAFF

Freshly prepared pizza is ready to go into EVO's custom-built, wood-burning oven for a quick, hot cook.

FRESH & HOT

EVO from Page 1D

how to build brick ovens. His background in baking, combined with a desire to bring "quality street vending" to Charleston, had a lot to do with finding the specialized pizza oven, according to McIntosh's wife, Mahwish. He pitched the pizza plan to Hacker, and they decided it was worth exploring.

Two years later, it's a reality. The team found a manufacturer of specialty pizza carts in Pittsburgh. The "solo" pizza carts have a wood-burning oven on the top, storage components, room for refrigeration, storage and a work station. Because the oven is made from refractory concrete, it reaches up to 1,000 degrees in temperature. This indirect heat source, combined with direct heat of the hot stone of the oven's

hearth, ensures a crisp crust in just three to five minutes. The oven is entirely fueled by wood-burning heat from local oak, cherry and maple trees, which imparts a sultry, smoky flavor in the pizza.

EVO prepares several different pizzas, including fougasse, margherita, calzones and daily specials. The tomato sauce, pesto and aioli are homemade and prepped at a rented space at Normandy Farms before the cart starts rolling to market. Many of the seasonal toppings, such as spring onions, tomatoes, spinach, new potatoes, free-range eggs, baby leeks and basil, are purchased directly from local farmers, which marries beautifully with the purpose and mood of local markets.

EVO attends the Kiawah Open-air Market on Tuesday, I'On mar-

ket on Thursday, Myrtle Beach market on Friday, and the Charleston Farmers Market on Saturday. EVO also sells pizza at Park Circle Coffee & Cream in North Charleston, hosts special events and provides a catering service.

Pizzas come in regular-size (about 11 to 12 inches in diameter, \$8) and mini-size (about 8 inches, \$6-\$7).

Even though the pizzas cook ultra-fast in the extra hot oven, be willing to wait a few minutes for EVO's pizza. The oven can only accommodate three pizzas at a time, so it can be up to a brief 10-minute wait when the stand is busy. But time passes quickly while you shop, and the cool, green grass in the shade of a tree in Marion Square is just the place to savor the market's latest Neapolitan delight.