


By Stephen D'Agostino
Photos by Christine Navin

A Man, A Truck & Everyone's Favorite Food

Ed Reposa brings pizza—and the food truck experience—to new heights with La Pizza Lupo

Ed Reposa loves taking his work vehicle out to get gas or run errands. Unlike, say, a Green Mountain Power truck with orange cones stacked on the back or a utilitarian van a plumber might use, Ed's vehicle attracts attention. It's a 1952 Ford pickup truck, shiny black with a grinning white grill. No logos emblazon the doors. Instead, his mobile place of work, a custom-built, Italian-designed, wood-fired pizza oven attached to the bed, speaks for itself.

The truck is Ed's business, La Pizza Lupo. "Last fall," he recalls, "I drove the truck to South Woodstock Country Store to get coffee. I had a wedding and anniversary party booked before I even got off the porch."



Ed with an arugula pesto, homemade fresh mozzarella, and Italian sundried pepper (not tomato!) pizza about to go into the oven.



Clockwise from top: La Pizza Lupo truck at an event. The truck visits the Hall Art Foundation in Reading, Vermont. Tim Shulga helps out by making a Singleton's smoked pepperoni pizza.

Ed himself is part of what makes La Pizza Lupo interesting and special. He has a warm demeanor and a smile that welcome you to converse. Even meeting Ed when he's not accompanied by the truck, you are compelled to chat.

THE BACKSTORY

He and his wife, Sara Kilguss, live in Reading, and they ended up in this area like many of us did. Sara's family had a house in Taftsville, and for years, the couple would visit when they weren't working. Work, at least for 12 years prior to their move to the area, was in Providence, Rhode Island, where they owned and operated the restaurant The

Red Fez. "We loved the hospitality industry," Ed says, "but not the hours and devotion it took to run such a business." Knowing it was time for a change, they decided they wanted to do "something that was truly different every day and where we could control our own destiny."

Piecing together their desire for change and their love of the area, they decamped to the Upper Valley. Here, Sara set up her own business, running SK Saddlefit, which sells and repairs saddles for equestrians all over New England. In the meantime, Ed took odd jobs that turned into the ingredients for his next business venture.

He made cheese at Spring Brook Farm, worked for Vermont Qual-

ity Meats, and did some local and distant catering events. On a trip to Charleston, South Carolina, he met the owner of Coastal Crust, a company that retrofits vehicles for mobile pizza ovens. It was then that "truly different" began to take shape. Working with Coastal Crust, he found the truck that would become his business and the inspiration for a name for his new venture.

"We were out doing events with the guy who built my truck," Ed says, "and I looked up at the full moon and made a joke that it was the pepperoni moon and from there my mind went to howling at the moon. Then lupu, or wolf, popped into my head."



Equating the moon to a common pizza topping and feeling confident in his choice of business are not surprising. Ed started making pizza at 14, and he is a self-confessed lover of all kinds of pies, even the frozen ones. He's not alone. "Pizza is so popular across all types of people," he says. With all the pieces in place, Ed turned the truly different into a reality and sold his first La Pizza Lupo pie in 2017.

Ed describes his style of pizza as "Neo-politan," a clever take on the classic pie style. "It's one foot in the old-world style," he says, "and one foot in America." With the focus on local cheeses, cured meats, and produce—if he had a third foot—you could say his pizza is also planted in Vermont. Collecting local ingredients is part of the process Ed goes through as he gets ready for every event.

Top: Lupo, a 1952 Ford F600 with the sides opened up, is ready for service at the Hall Art Foundation's First Fridays event.

Above: Tucker Terzian, Tim Shulga, and Ed pose during a break in the action.

TIME TO MAKE THE PIZZA

The first step in the preparation is to get his naturally leavened, cold-fermenting dough rising. He likes to do this three days in advance. While the dough is warming and developing its flavor, he handles step two: deciding what's going to be on the menu. For public events, he likes to have at least three different pizzas available but no more than six. For private events, though, he will bring up to 40 ingredients and sauces, so the combinations are seemingly endless.

Step three happens the day before the event. Ed loads wood into the oven, lights it, and gets the temperature up to 900°. He'll roast any vegetables needed





If Pizza's Not Your Thing

Shame on you! But seriously, La Pizza Lupo is not all that Ed Reposa does. He also runs Cordwood Catering, which is more than pizza. Ed shows off his culinary skills by offering shellfish, raw bars, roasts, and **bar-becue** as food options.



Left: Tim slides a pizza into the Valoriani Italian-built wood-burning oven.

Clockwise from top: Parmesan is grated over a Margherita pie. A pesto pie. Ed works the dough while volunteers Tucker and Tim take a break. Ed's wife Sara Kilguss covers the register.

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for the pies and then close up the oven. Since it's so efficient at retaining heat, the next day—the day of the event—the oven will still be at 450°.

With his ingredients packed up, he heads off to the event. "I only need to arrive an hour before I plan to cook the first pie," says Ed. In that time, he loads more wood into the oven to get it back up to 900°.

Once Ed starts doing what he does best, things go like clockwork. When a pie is ordered, it takes two minutes to assemble it and only 90 seconds in the hot oven. These three and a half minutes of repetitive action continue until the event is over or the last pie has been served.

While he's hard at work, he's usually wearing a bandana, a t-shirt, and shorts. Though his commitment is to the pie he is assembling at the moment, Ed has an uncanny—but not unexpected—ability to be fully involved in a conversation with his patrons.

Given that La Pizza Lupo is an outside business, Ed does events from spring through fall. The truck made its first appearance of 2018 at the Vermont Overland Maple Adventure Ride (run by fellow Reading resident Peter Vollers) at Ascutney Mountain on March 25. Ed says that La Pizza Lupo will be showing up at many Vermont Overland events this year. In addition, La Pizza Lupo will be at Woodstock's Market on the Green every other week for the entire season. Although Ed's on the lookout for other farmers' markets to participate in, he has increased the number of private events he is catering. "This seems to be the year of the pizza truck wedding," he says.

If, for some reason, he finds a lull in the action or needs to drum up more business, all he'll need to do is get in the truck and cruise around the region, appointment book in hand, and let the truck do the work for him. For more information on La Pizza Lupo, visit lapizzalupo.com. 🍕

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