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Beyond Pizzerias: Why more restaurants are banking on the ROI of pizza ovens

As more restaurants rely on pizza for revenue, a reliable pizza oven is a wise investment. We spoke to the team at Marana Forni Australia for more on this trend.

By Maida Pineda December 9 2025 6 min read



Australia experienced a 9.7% drop in dedicated pizza restaurants and takeaway businesses last year. According to IBIS World data, there were 3,329 dedicated pizza restaurants in 2023 and 3,005 in 2024, a drop from \$4.4bn in 2023 to \$4.1bn in 2024. While these numbers reflect dedicated pizza restaurants and takeaways, Cristina Molinaro Passilongo, Chief Strategy and Operations Officer for Marana Forni Australia, is witnessing a different trend.

More and more Australian restaurants are investing in pizza ovens.

Molinaro Passilongo explains that this trend goes beyond traditional pizza restaurants: “In our experience, we are noticing that a lot of pubs or other venues that typically didn’t have pizza before, they are adding pizza to their menu.”

“Hotels, resorts, pubs, and clubs are working with us. We’ve sold about 30 ovens now to clubs in New South Wales and Southeast Queensland,” she volunteers. Clubs attracted an older demographic due to gaming in the past, but that’s shifting.

“Post-COVID, clubs are now attracting a younger demographic. They are becoming more family-oriented, even adding playgrounds to the venue. They are trying to attract families with traditional games like darts and golf. Clubs are also focused on making their venues food-oriented, investing in huge renovations and kitchen fit-outs.”

Pizza is a good strategy for drawing in families, and Molinaro-Passilongo thinks it’s a no-brainer: “Pizza has a high return on investment. You have a high profit margin. Families are going to pubs or clubs instead of restaurants to get more value for their money.”

Pizza is a far-reaching trend

Marana Forni has sold more than 800 Pizza ovens in Australia. Its clients are not just from big cities like Melbourne and Sydney, but also from more remote areas, such as Discovery Parks at Kings Canyon in the Northern Territory. Soon, they will deliver an oven to Bremer Island, NT. She shares, “It’s about 700 kilometres from the nearest capital city. To access that site, we have to ask permission from two indigenous communities to be able to cross and make our way there.”

Molinaro Passilongo says roughly 60% of their clients are now non-dedicated pizza restaurants, adding that even pubs have stepped up their food game, now offering more bistro-style food.



With more travel, Australians are exposed to different cuisines around the world and varied types of cooking. They have developed a more sophisticated palate, appreciating cooking over an open flame. When they go to a venue now, they look at the food, but they also want to enjoy the dining experience from the staff to the aesthetics to the menu. With the rising cost of living, clubs are striving to meet the demand for more affordable meals and family-oriented venues.

Purchasing a pizza oven is no longer just for dedicated pizza restaurants. And this means pizza ovens are no longer just for cooking pizza. She has clients who use the Marana oven for wood fire cooking.

“Olympus, a beautiful Greek Restaurant here in Surry Hills, cook their bread, calamari, octopus, the Saganaki, and other dishes in their Marana pizza oven,” she says. Clients also cook Turkish dishes, focaccia, and even panettone in their pizza ovens.

The Apple of pizza ovens

She laughs as she recalls how one client calls Marana the Apple of pizza ovens, referring to its innovation and ease of use. It is a substantial investment, ranging from \$40,000 to \$100,000, with their clients spending an average of \$60,000 for a pizza oven.

Molinaro Passilongo insists the ROI on this equipment is immediate: “You don’t have to hire a person to turn the pizza. Because they are rotary ovens, you don’t need to have someone there consistently moving the pizza inside the oven to make sure that it’s not burning. It’s not like a deck oven where you open the door, load the pizza in, and every time you open the door, the temperature will drop.”

Her clients also noticed they use a third less timber than they would use in their previous pizza oven.



Another practical consideration in investing in a pizza oven is maintenance. It is thoughtfully designed so it can be easily repaired, even on a remote island.

“For example, if there is an issue with the rotating cooking plate, it can be replaced. You can remove that section and replace it with a brand-new piece. You don’t need to remove the whole cooking plate and then reinstall that,” she says.

It was also designed for easy cleaning. “If you’re burning wood, the ash is collected in its own ashtray. It’s very easy to clean, because the ash does not mix with the cooking plate.” Built to last, the first Marana oven, created and installed in 1992, is still operational in Verona, Italy today.

Delivering consistency, every time

But a pizza oven’s most important feature is its ability to consistently deliver delicious pizzas with ease.

With the Marana rotary system, the pizza chef does not need to turn the pizzas manually. The cooking plate spins and cooks the pizzas evenly every time. Its mid-priced model, SU&GUI, features a patented mechanism that raises the cooking plate, offering three cooking levels.

“You can reach different temperatures in the oven. If you’re cooking a Neapolitan pizza that requires 400 degrees or higher, you can raise the cooking plate to cook at that very high temperature. If you need a classic Italian pizza at 320 degrees, you can do that at level one.”

Restaurants often have a lull in service. When service gets busy again, the cooking plate can be lifted closer to the dome to achieve the desired higher temperature quickly. This guarantees less consumption of fuel.

Molinaro Passilongo points out: “It also means you don’t have any black spots because the temperature is uniform across the cooking plate.”

Marana’s top-of-the-line model is called the Genius system, which is better suited for takeaway pizza venues, according to Molinaro Passilongo. “We sell a lot of the Genius to clubs and pubs because of the high turnover of pizza chefs. You don’t need any skill at all to use it. You literally put the pizza into the oven at the front, and it cooks the pizza in one rotation. The pizza goes very, very slowly around the oven. By the time it comes back to the front, it’s ready to be removed. It means that you can cook higher outputs of pizza per hour.”

As more restaurants rely on pizza for revenue, a consistent, reliable, and intuitive pizza oven is a wise investment.

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