

Signature Dishes From Completely Normal Individuals: Judd Miller



Welcome to the first installment of what will hopefully be a long running series: Signature Dishes From Completely Normal Individuals.

You don't have to be a restaurant chef to be able to make really delicious food. So this series is all about celebrating great dishes, cooked at home, by people who are not professionals.

Today's spotlight is on [Judd Miller](#). He's an old family friend, a great guy, and also one of the leading musicians in the world for the [EVI](#) (electric valve instrument), having played on loads of movie soundtracks, ranging from Karate Kid II to Spider-Man 2. But our focus is on something he does extremely well in the kitchen: make pizza.

Welcome

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Thanks! RT [@DianaTakesaBite](#): [@manbitesworld](#) I think your use of the word "luscious" automatically disqualifies you from hipsterdom. [1 day ago](#)

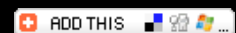
[@marissafoodnart](#) pickled grapes were sweet, very sour, and tasted a lot like tarragon. Good snack with a little pate. Maybe cocktail too. [1 day ago](#)

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The moment I walked into his home, I was greeted by a shot of very nice gin, a spread of appetizers, and a fairly impressive *mise en place*, including bacon, onions, olives, fresh tomatoes, truffle salt, porcini salt and garlic-infused crème fraîche. He also had a saliva-inducing collection of jarred hot peppers.



But what makes Judd's pizzas particularly good? "Cook with love," says Judd, "but the intent is key to everything. It needs to have love, but also concentration. People try to ask me questions all the time when I'm cooking, but I tell them to stop. You've got to pay attention when you're cooking."

And he's right. It's a common misconception about recipes— that they're precise, or exact. They aren't. You're cooking with things that used to be alive. Flavors are different from tomato to tomato. You have to be able to test, adapt, think on your feet and ultimately, be aware of what's going on with the food in front of you.

But what, tangibly, does Judd do?



Well first off, you need a pizza stone. It's the only way to even pretend to make decent pizza at home. You can get them at more places than you think. Even [Target](#) has a cheap one. So get a pizza stone. It will make your crust endlessly better.



Secondly, there's the dough. I recommend buying a ball of dough from whatever pizzeria you like near your house, or if you're really committed, making your own. But it's not a requirement. Judd actually uses the Trader Joe's brand of dough. Just make sure to let it rest and get down to room temperature before you start working with it.

Set your oven to the highest possible temperature (for Judd, that's 550°) and put

the pizza stone in there with it. A hot stone is what gives you a great crust.



Cornmeal. Judd tosses it on the top of the stone "for smell and texture."



Pre-baking and stretching. Judd rolls out his dough, then when he lays it out on the stone, he stretches it out with the pin so that it spreads over the whole stone. And don't worry about adding olive oil, or God-forbid, a non-stick spray onto your pizza stone. Just put it on there and let it do its job. Then you put the dough and the stone *back* in the oven as quickly as possible for about a minute or two, to pre-bake. When it comes out, it should be a gorgeous, bubbling canvas.



Toppings. Use restraint. Too many toppings will undermine your crust and make it floppy and soggy. So take your pre-baked dough out, add whatever toppings you want, and then bake until the whole thing has come together and looks like a wonderful, delicious pizza.





We had a few picky (or vegetarian) eaters in our midst, so first, Judd knocked out a simple cheese pizza and a nice veggie pizza. They were very good, but he had some specialty pies waiting in the wings.



The final two pizzas were, simply, to die for (or in the case of one of them— to die because of). First up was a smoked mozzarella pizza with fresh tomatoes, garlic, truffle salt and oregano, then finished with some grated parmesan and a drizzle of olive oil. It was smokey, juicy, and had a beautifully thin and crisp, yet tender crust. A perfect balance. He also recommends it with some fresh chopped basil tossed on at the end.



The last pizza is a bit of an artery clogger—or as most of us would call it—absolutely freaking delicious. This pizza consists of the aforementioned garlic-infused crème fraîche, bacon, porcini salt and onions. This creamy, goopy, vessel of fatty deliciousness is a thing of beauty. The bacon is pre-cooked, but once tossed back in the oven, on the pizza, it starts crackling anew, and seeping it's wonderful pork fat all over the place. A masterpiece.





So, in conclusion, Judd Miller can make one hell of a pizza. The wine was flowing, the company was exceptional, and I went home a happy, happy man. So special thanks to Judd and his entire family for having us over. What a night.

And now I'm hungry.

Do you make a great dish better than anybody you know? When friends and neighbors find out you're cooking "____", do they try to come over and get in on the action? If so, and you want to be highlighted, shoot me an email at [noah@galuten\[dot\]com](mailto:noah@galuten[dot]com) with the subject: "Completely Normal Individual"

Comments

1. [Dara Hashemi](#) · Apr 30, 02:42 PM

"Signature Dishes From Completely Normal Individuals" is the greatest blogfoodseries I've ever heard of. Please continue.

2. [Peter Erskine](#) · Apr 30, 06:07 PM

Man-oh-man, that pizza looks and tastes INCREDIBLE!!!
Judd IS the master pizza man; he and Lisa are the hosts with the mosts, and Judd is also one of my favorite musicians.

3. [Gary Grenell](#) · May 17, 09:56 AM

His Pizza may be Great (I never tried it), but he should never have disbanded "Pacific Ocean"!!

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