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Backyard Pizzeria: Easily Turn Your Gas Grill Into Brick Oven



There are a lot of ways to cook pizza at home, and I've tried many of them. The BakerStone Pizza Oven Box is my favorite to date.

I don't say this lightly, because I love pizza, and it's a subject I've been writing on for years. I also love cooking, and have some skills, but sadly, pizza making isn't one of them. I bought tiles to transform my wall oven into a pizza oven, I've tried stones and sheets and special perforated round pans. I've cooked pizza on the grill. None of these methods has worked well for me. So while I've only had the BakerStone for two weeks, I wish I had it ten years ago.

The concept is brilliantly simple: it is a five sided (left, right, top, bottom, back) box made of sheets of stone material, enclosed within a metal frame. Like most brick pizza ovens, the kind associated with high-temperature Neopolitan-style pizza, it is open on the front. The box sits on top of your backyard gas grill, you turn on the burners, and it heats up – all the way into the magical realm of 600°-800°, maybe not quite as super-hot as some 900° wood ovens but much hotter than

most home ovens (or gas grills). Hot enough to cook a pizza in 2-3 minutes.

The BakerStone allows you to throw your own easy backyard pizza party.

Because I write a lot about grills smokers, barbecue and all forms of outdoor cooking, I get sent or offered a lot of gizmos to try out, and most are useless or junk. No one needs a special rack to cook hot dogs. I try some of the more promising stuff, and if it is good, I tell you about it, if it is not I don't,

and to be honest when the folks at BakerStone offered to send this to me, I was skeptical and thought it would be the latter, in the “too good to be true, who needs another contraption” file. I was wrong. It’s awesome. Less than week after I got it, I bought one for a close friend as a gift, and that’s about as good an endorsement as I can give.



My very first pizza using the BakerStone Pizza Oven Box – classic Margherita!

It is also very reasonably priced. It retails for \$129 and you can find it for slightly less or online with free shipping. I was also offered a much fancier backyard pizza oven to test this summer that cost nearly \$7,000 but I passed because really, how often are you going to use it? Use this baby once or twice a season for entertaining and you’ll feel the price was right. Then put it away because it doesn’t take up much room.

You put it right on the grates of your grill, turn the burners on high, and let it heat up. Directions say this takes 20 minutes but it took my Weber more like 35 to get it up above 600°, but then it stayed there steadily throughout repeated pizza cooking. Whether you use store bought pizza dough or make your own, the process is the same: roll or push out the dough, top it, put it on a peel (sort of mandatory accessory given the high heat) slide it in, and within seconds, the crust starts to rise. The directions suggest turning it quarterly every 30 seconds because the back of the box is hotter, and I did that, and out comes pizza. Very good pizza. The first night I tested it for my wife and I to get a feel for the process, the second night I hosted a backyard pizza party, laid out toppings and made pies to order – it’s pretty easy to do that when they take less than 3 minutes each.



The Pizza Oven Box at work, cooking a pizza on my gas grill at around 700 degrees, in less than three minutes

There’s not much more, the concept is really simple and really fun, a true crowd pleaser, except I’d like to add that in this day and age when almost everything requiring assembly – no matter how expensive – comes with really lame directions, usually a picture or two and some unlisted parts – these were super detailed, super accurate and idiot proof. It’s small thing, but it’s a thing almost np

product gets right, and believe me, I get a lot more stuff that need assembly than the average person. So kudos for the quality directions.

Now for the caveats. The single biggest problem with the BakerStone is its size: as the website clearly says, the unit is designed to fit "most" three burner grills, which by definition are large grills. I have a three burner Weber Genesis, a very popular model and it fits, but with very little room to spare. One friend who came for pizza lamented that it wouldn't fit his two burner Weber Spirit, also a very popular grill. You should definitely measure and check first if you are considering buying one. A lot of smaller grills simply won't accept the BakerStone. If it does fit, the box itself is much better for individual or couples' pizzas, like 12-14 inches. If you try to make a New York-style large sized pie, you can probably just squeeze it in, but unless you are really skilled with a peel it's probably going to end badly. Think about how big a gas grill surface is relative to pizzas, shrink that to allow for margins, and you are better off with more smaller pizzas. Most of the other potential issues are not related to the device, but to pizza making in general. It is very important that you keep the peel clean and well-floured and avoid the dough sticking. Sliding the pizza in takes getting used to and on one attempt I was too enthusiastic and it hit the back wall, sticking to it. The good news is that even if your pizza doesn't come out as perfectly round eye candy, it still tastes great.

After a couple of pizzas it became simple and delightful, and I've made regular crust, whole wheat crust, even calzones and I can't stop myself. The directions also say you can cook other things, and put a cast iron skillet in there, preheat it, and sear steaks like a fancy steakhouse, since most of those cook at much higher temps than home ovens or stoves allow, like 800°. I haven't tried steak yet, but I've tried a lot of delicious pizza.