

Pure Pizza

by: Mandi English

photo: Deborah Triplett



Farm to table. Environmentally friendly. Green revolution. These terms all get thrown around like it's nobody's business. Juli Metacalf Ghazi has made it her business. She has tossed these concepts along with her heart and soul into Pure Pizza.

Prior to this interview, my experience with this lady was only in passing, but she always treated me as if she has known me my entire life. Her energy and passion is infectious and it shows in what she does with her (now) two locations. She is passionate about food and community and truly loves the people who work with her (she doesn't consider them as working "for" her). As she readied for our chat, I watched her clear tables and talk to her customers (it was beautiful to watch the exchanges). Everyone there is kind, the customer service is impeccable, and the food could not be more fresh and delicious. It just "feels" good to be there.

Like many people, after the recession, Juli was in search of something outside of the corporate sector. She was interested in doing something she was passionate about. Many things came to mind. She was a mom who had tried her hand at homemade, organic baby food, but, like most of us moms, she realized that was a harder sell than one might think. Other ideas came along, but, ultimately, her path led her to pizza. "Everyone loves pizza", she says. "It is not trendy." It's not a passing notion. "It is always a food that people come back to".

Pure Pizza was one of the first stalls set up at the 7th Street Market along with Not Just Coffee, and Cloud 9 Bakery. The market was a fresh, new kind of place for Charlotte. It is a big open area with lots of community seating and several vending areas serving prepared food and sundries. There is a farmers market every Saturday. No one knew about the market at that time, they just took a chance and Juli says they gave away A LOT of free pizza. She knew if folks just tried it they would LOVE it. And love it they did. Pure Pizza

contains all fresh ingredients - from the salads to the dough. They offer gluten and dairy-free and Juli (literally) knows first hand where every single bite originates (the person who grew or raised it). They leave a clean carbon footprint and that is the whole idea.

With this kind of commitment, delicious food, and hard work, Pure Pizza now turns out over 1,000 pizzas out of their 250 square foot space on the weekends. With that kind of volume, it was time to look into another location. She turned to the Plaza-Midwood area. The wonderful Lulu's was closing after several years and she was fortunate to step in and take over that spot. The dedication that Juli has for her community is seen in everything she does. This is reflected in the people she hires and from whom she orders. Pork products come from Wild Turkey Farms. They are a family farm in Salisbury that uses ethical practices for raising their animals (and happen to be a My City Magazine favorite). She also supports Wincrest Farms, which is one the largest organic, local farms. She recently started carrying a new dessert option which is a gluten-free brownie made by a young entrepreneur in town (Cara Jorgensen of Gateau Baking Co.) She will be adding a small farmers market out back of the Central Avenue location soon. It will include kid's yoga and an open air market with local growers.

The people of Plaza-Midwood made jokes about having another pizza place in the hood. They stopped chuckling once they got to know Juli and Pure Pizza. Upon trying the food, it is quite evident that this is NOT just *another pizza place*. Supporting the community and being regionally sustainable is the mission and they just so happen to make a damn fine pizza.

Plaza Midwood : 1911 Central Ave., 28205, 980-430-1701
Mon-Sat | 11am-10pm / Sun | closed

7th St. Market : 224 E. 7th St., 28202, 980-207-0037
Mon-Thurs | 11am-7pm / Fri-Sat | 11am-8pm / Sun | Closed

PurePizzaCLT.com