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THE DISH

Slices suit proles, upper crust alike

By SHERI JENNINGS
ROME

Little known outside of Rome but nibbled here in the late afternoon as a pre-dinner snack or seen late morning in the hands of toddlers, *pizza bianca* (white pizza) has been a favorite for Romans of all ages and social levels for generations.

Unlike the round, tomato-covered pies served in America, this crisp and tender dish measures 10 inches wide and 6 feet long, earning its name because its only toppings are extra virgin olive oil and medium grain salt. Baked in a stone oven, the pizza is great hot or at room temperature, generally folded in two, wrapped in brown paper and handed over a packed *banco* (counter).

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Arguably Rome's best comes from the *forno* (oven) of Fabrizio Roscoli, Forno Campo dei Fiori. Roscoli says the secret to the quality of his pizza bianca lies in the long rising of the dough (around eight hours) and kneading that makes this snack lighter than traditional pizza.

Roscoli, whose family has owned the biz since 1970 on the location where it has been since the 1800s, says his clientele comes from every social level — even Francis Ford Coppola was a regular customer while lensing "Godfather III" in Rome. Whether in the hands of working-class laborers or balanced between the thumb and forefingers of suited politicians, this popular delicacy feeds virtually everyone — and almost every day.

Now that Roscoli has taught his art to *stranieri* (foreigners), pizza bianca *alla Romana* has also made its way to Boston, New York and London, where others can sample Rome's once well-kept secret.

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GETS THE RED OUT: *At the Forno Campo dei Fiori, Italians of all classes enjoy* pizza bianca, *a tomato-free variation brushed with olive oil and sprinkled with salt.*