

With more than 25 locations scattered across the United States — as far south as Alabama and as far north as Ohio — it's easy to think of **Brixx** Wood Fired Pizza + Craft Bar as just another pizza chain.

Especially with five locations in the Charlotte area alone.

However, when the original Dilworth location opened in 1998, it was markedly a neighborhood dig fueled by community, craft beer and wood fired pizza.

Founding partners Barbara Bodford-Morgan, Eric Horsley and Jeff Van Dyke launched the restaurant after Horsley returned from a vacation out west. "Eric was on a ski vacation in Colorado," Van Dyke told CharlotteFive. "He was inspired by woodfired pizza and loved the simplicity of the concept."

The three partners knew each other from years of working together at former Charlotte restaurants Barley and Rye and Providence Cafe. "Barley and Rye was a steakhouse with fresh seafood," Van Dyke said. "Providence Cafe had an eclectic menu of pasta, grilled seafood and a couple of pizzas." Equipped with years of managing restaurants, the three dreamed of opening a restaurant together.

How **Brixx** grew from a Charlotte pizza spot to a regional chainThe concept for **Brixx** Wood Fired Pizza + Craft Bar was simple: Serve beer, wine and craft pizza in a relaxed atmosphere.

Great atmosphere and food

The concept for **Brixx** was simple — serve beer, wine and craft pizza in a relaxed atmosphere. "We've always wanted it to be a comfortable atmosphere, so people aren't afraid to bring their kids and make a little noise," Van Dyke said. "But it's elevated enough for a date night or business lunch."

The atmosphere seems to be very conducive for date night. "We've got a lot of people working for us that met at **Brixx**, are now married with kids and still work for us. Our director of marketing had her first date with her husband at **Brixx** Dilworth. And their second date was at **Brixx** Birkdale," Van Dyke said.

For others, the housemade dough, housemade mozzarella cheese and fresh toppings draw back pizza lovers. Others keep returning for the sandwiches on fresh-baked focaccia bread or the hearty salads with housemade dressing. "The **Brixx** Salad has been hugely popular since day one," Van Dyke said — it's a spring mix with pistachios, crumbled goat cheese and croutons tossed with housemade balsamic vinaigrette.

The Bronx Bomber, with spicy Italian sausage, prosciutto, mozzarella, gorgonzola and fresh oregano, is a top-selling pizza. Vegans and vegetarians also have plenty of options. "From Day 1, we were committed to being vegetarian and vegan friendly," Van Dyke said. "We've always had vegan cheese, and now we offer two types of gluten-free crust. One of our most popular crusts is the cauliflower crust."

Brixx-09653.jpgThe Bronx Bomber is **Brixx's** signature pizza, featuring spicy Italian sausage, prosciutto, mozzarella and gorgonzola on tomato sauce and topped with fresh oregano.

Growing beer scene

Since 1998, **Brixx** has become a destination for both wood-fired pizza lovers and craft beer aficionados — but that wasn't always the case. The name **Brixx** — in addition to the brick-fired oven reference — is a nod to the word brix, which relates to measuring the amount of sugar in wine. "We anticipated that wine would be a best-seller, but beer is our best-selling beverage at every location," Van Dyke said.

"When we opened, we had 12 beers on tap — that was a big selection of beer in 1998," Van Dyke said. Now, **Brixx** locations have 24 beers on tap — a wide selection, but the right amount to ensure they stay fresh.**Brixx** has craft beer specials throughout the week, including \$2.50 pints every Monday.

Wine lovers haven't been left behind, though — 14 wines are still available by the glass — and bottles are half price on Sunday.

Rana's freemium column

Community roots

In nearly 25 years of operation, **Brixx** has provided Van Dyke with plenty of memories. Like the time a faulty sensor in the hood triggered the fire alarm and foam fire retardant filled the kitchen of the Birkdale location during a training party. Or the time that sports superstars Nomar Garciaparra, Mia Hamm and Tyler Hansbrough dined together at the Chapel Hill spot. Or when country music star Luke Bryan ordered pizzas to his Nashville home for a Super Bowl party.

Amidst the growth, **Brixx** has maintained its community roots here in Charlotte. Each year, the Hit the **Brixx** 5K and 10K races raise money for Hospice and Palliative Care of Charlotte. **Brixx** also has an ongoing partnership with the Isabella Santos Foundation, and hosts school fundraisers throughout the year.

Brixx-9655.jpgThe seating at **Brixx** Wood Fired Pizza + Craft Bar's Foxcroft location, 7814 Fairview Road.

Brixx is a go-to for many Charlotteans. "We want to turn guests into friends and regulars," Van Dyke said. Decades later, he still gravitates to the Bronx Bomber — technically, he prefers a pizza that's half Bronx Bomber and half Mexican (black bean spread base with mozzarella and cheddar, wood-roasted chicken, Roma tomatoes and sliced fresh jalapeños topped with sour cream). And that's his pro tip: "We don't advertise half and half pizzas — but we do it all the time," Van Dyke said.

Brixx

Location: Multiple locations

Neighborhood: Birkdale, Blakeney, Dilworth, Fort Mill, Foxcroft, Gastonia

Menu

Cuisine: Italian, American, pizza

Hours: Sunday through Thursday, 11 a.m.-11 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m.-12 a.m.

Instagram: @brixxpizza

CITATION (APA STYLE)

Freeman, P. (2022, August 15). This homegrown chain was built in Charlotte on craft beer and woodfired pizza. *Charlotte Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC)*. Available from NewsBank: America's News – Historical and Current: <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.proxy141.nclive.org/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/18BE8D53B674A0C8>.

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