

**Across town, on the student-centric** corridor of Walnut Street/Nord Avenue, another wood-fired oven has been pushing out Neapolitan-style crusts during the pandemic.

Pizza Riot opened one week before California's stay-at-home order was issued. Before then, owners Kristin and Bruce Riot had already become somewhat established in Chico as street vendors. The husband and wife had been selling their pies at various locations around town for several months, building a reputation with a creative menu of vegan, organic, non-GMO pies.

"Luckily we had a really good platform from our pop-up," Kristin said during a recent phone interview. The mother of two was often seen wearing her baby daughter in a sling as she shaped dough at pop-ups, and the couple leveraged social media to build a following of people craving vegan options as well as many meat-eaters who didn't realize the menu was all plant-based.

"They were surprised to find out that we were vegan," Kristin said. "People are missing texture and seasoning [of meat]," she added, so several of the options are created with replicating those

qualities in mind. The most notorious example on the menu is the Dirty Burger (an homage to the burger stand from *Trailer Park Boys*), a sort of deconstructed hamburger on a crust (for \$15), with barbecue sauce, "mozzarella," Beyond Burger meat, cherry tomatoes, pickles and red onions. The sweet sauce and tangy pickle cement the familiar impression and are great complements as well.

During my first visit, I also picked up one of Pizza Riot's Sunflowers, which is a mini pizza in the center surrounded by folded "petals" filled with out-of-this-world house ricotta (made with cashews) and basil. I got the original (\$14) with a "cheeze" and marinara pizza center and fresh marinara dipping sauce.

The airy, chewy crust on both pies was perfectly done.

Some of the other inventive pizzas include the Japanarchy (featuring shitake mushrooms, sesame seeds, lime and teriyaki drizzle) and the Korean Cholo (with chorizo, jalapeños, avocado-lime drizzle and a side of kimchi). There's also a selection of Asian-Mexican fusion tacos and Riot Dogs, featuring Beyond Meat dogs wrapped in pizza dough. □

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Mulberry Station Brewing Co.'s Electric Rail pale ale with the Smoked Porky (upper left), and the Sunflower and Dirty Burger from Pizza Riot.



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