



Pizza Ovens Made Easy

A Professional DIY Guide to Headache-Free Building

Lynne Sheffield

This book accompanies an online course which has more instructions and video footage to explain the process more in depth. For more information, please go to:

www.qualitytraininginconstruction.com

About the Illustrator

Catherine (Cat) Collier was born in Canberra, Australia.

Since a young age, Cat has had a passion for design and illustration. She attended the University of Canberra, where she received her Bachelor in Graphic Design.

Cat specialises in graphic design and illustration and hopes to do children book illustrating in the future.

She can be contacted at **catherine.e.collier@hotmail.com**.

Testimonial

I have worked in this industry for the past 13 years and have been involved in many training programs, both accredited and non-accredited. I had never before witnessed the personal involvement and care that you displayed to assist our clients with training and finding work, something of which I am very appreciative – as were our clients.

It is my personal view that many training organisations do the bare minimum and churn clients through just to make a dollar. Although I appreciate that we all have to make a living, Australia needs people like you who go the extra mile to put us on the world stage and make a better country for all. Work skills are important things for most people (in particular for my cohorts, refugee and Aboriginal Australians) and working with you has demonstrated your passion to teach these.

—Nigel Maloney

Maloney's Education and Employment Partners

Dedication

I couldn't have written this book if it weren't for Fritz Henkel; he was really the first one to build the pizza oven and fix my dilemma with the dome. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to become a bricklayer and for all your years of advice.

To all the bricklayers and labourers with whom I have worked: well done for putting up with me, and thank you for helping me to develop my skills and myself!

To all my apprentices, past, present, and future, this book really is for you. Thank you for teaching me how to be a good teacher!

And, lastly, to the employers of all my apprentices: thank you for trusting in me to look after and train your apprentices.

Contents

1. My Story

My First Pizza Oven

I built my first oven around 2005. I remember my dad, Fritz Henkel, an old German bricklayer, having a go at me because I was caught up researching how to build the oven. There was really only vague information around at the time, and I was stuck on the dome part of the oven building. This had me stumped. How was I going to keep the dome from falling in? Bricks don't like you tipping them too much!

Well, one weekend, my dad built his own pizza oven – by himself – and then came to me and told me he had done it! I was so envious – fancy him doing that! I thought that I had better go and see for myself.



She looked a beauty, though small. A family size pizza wouldn't fit inside the oven, but it was still a pizza oven. Eventually, he told me that he had used sand – that became my template.

So, off I went to the coast to my mum's house to build her one. I was thinking, 'She could make her own bread and sell it, couldn't she! She could even get up at 2am with her neighbour, make the bread, and deliver it by morning to the markets. That way, those two girls could earn a bit of extra money. Why, they had chooks that laid the best eggs – big round ones – and they were in demand big time. Shouldn't be too hard to sell the breads!'

When I mentioned this to my mum, she looked at me as if I were a moron. Oh, yes, that's a great idea – not! Why would she want to do that? Still, I persisted.

'Okay, Mum, I am going to make you a pizza oven down in your shed, out of the way. We could have pizzas when I visit!'

'Oh, okay, Lynne.'

So, I collected all the materials – I even purchased fire bricks! – and built my mum a pizza oven. I made the oven look like a baby's bonnet. You can be really creative if you want to be when building an oven.

As you can see in the photos, I built the dome, covered it in chicken wire, and then built another skin over the top. She doesn't have a flue, which is fine, because it's a long way from the house and the smoke won't be bothering anyone.

I was so proud of my first oven. My mum was, too; she said it looks like she has a turtle in her yard. My dad came down and poked his nose into my pizza oven and was impressed with the size and the attempt of the bonnet, though he still picked on it.

The oven looks great, but many years later and many ovens later I am not so sure how well she'll go. To this day, it has never been fired; I am afraid it will crack. I learnt that the oven needs a lot more insulation to protect the dome from cracking. But, hey! That was my first oven.



Your first oven will not be like this one, because you will have the help all my years of experience of building pizza ovens. You'll have a beauty of an oven, and you will be as proud as when I made my first one.

Every oven I build is slightly different, and it is the same for my students. These ovens are all handcrafted and built – they're not just manufactured and dumped into your yard to use.

You, too, will be handcrafting your very own oven for yourself. You will have issues where perhaps the dome isn't perfectly round, or there are flat spots in the curves, or one side comes up higher than the other side, and these are all okay. It will still work, and I reckon it will give your oven character!

Now, if you are a bricklayer and you want sell these ovens, well, no, that is not okay. Pull it up and redo it, you lazy thing!

Early Life

There were no other girl bricklayers in Canberra when I was starting out bricklaying. Men did tell me of ladies who were bricklayers – a lady in Tasmania and I think one in Queensland – so it really wasn't *unheard of*, but I did have some challenges I had to work through.

I was brought up in a house full of girls – six girls to my family. My dad went back to his home country in Norway when I was about six years of age, and my mum looked after all us girls on her own. She did not go on any pension ever! She worked as a horticulturist – on weekends, she often had gardens to attend to – and she also had evening cleaning jobs. I guess my mum understood what it was like to be different in her field as well; there were not many female horticulturists around at that time.

Us girls all had to help her. We were dragged out on the weekends to come help her do the gardens and maintenance of these big businesses. I have vivid memories of my elder sisters (I am the second youngest) working and moving lawns. Boys would drive past whistling at them, and they would stop their mowers by the roadway to talk to them. My mum had a drive-on mower, and she would fly up to them to go off. My poor mum – I wonder if she ever wished she had six boys? Would it have been easier for her?

My mum was very different; she never drank alcohol or smoked. She cooked our meals every night and made everything from scratch. We all had to chip in with the housework – can you imagine how much washing six girls can create? Mum would leave lists as long as computer paper in a box, giving jobs for us all to do. Again, I can recall my elder sisters rushing an hour before Mum was due home to clean the house up.

You know, I never appreciated those skills my mum and sisters imparted to me as a young woman. I think all those years of helping – well, of being made to help – with all the household chores and weekend work paid off. I am a very good worker, and every single one of my sisters are all very good workers, too.

When I was 14, my mum met my now stepdad Fritz, a German bricklayer by trade.

When I was 15, I went to live in Norway with my real dad, Per Hartveit, who is now deceased. I only stayed maybe six months before coming back home. I find change hard, and living in another country was very difficult even though I loved my dad. So, I moved back home.

I felt like I didn't fit anywhere. I was very angry and very immature when I was a young girl. But, this is my story.

When I finished high school, Mum came to me and asked me what I wanted to do for work, or if I had thought of going to college. I said that I wanted to be a bricklayer's labourer. Mum simply said to me, 'It may be hard to find work in that area,' so I ended up asking my best friend at the time what she was going to do. She proudly informed me that she was going to be a secretary. So, Mum got the news, 'I am going to be a secretary.' No alarm bells from Mum?! I sucked at English and couldn't spell at all!

Off to secretary school I went. You had to dress appropriately to attend the classes like you would when you were going to work. I had nothing like that in my wardrobe – I went to Mum and asked, 'Can I have some money for a dress for classes?' I still laugh now.

I had no one to help me; all my older sisters had flown the coop. I thought, 'Okay, Big W; that's where Mum brought my clothes from.' I went to the old ladies' section because that's what I thought secretaries wore. I bought a skirt, shirt, and low high heels. How embarrassing was it when I attended the class! All the girls wore beautiful dresses, and here I was looking like I was in old granny clothes – which I was. The teacher took it as though I was being rude.

No, secretary school did not suit me at all. But, it did teach me how to type with all fingers, and now I can touch type. My spelling has improved (though the way I talk hasn't!).

In 1985, I married because I was pregnant. I left secretarial studies and moved to Sydney to live with my husband. I was 16.5 years of age.

I was 17 years of age when I had my baby girl Kristy. She is beautiful!

I left the marriage after 18 months. The father disowned my daughter and never had anything to do with her because I left.

She had chronic eczema and asthma, which meant that she needed a lot of bandages, creams, ointments and medication for the asthma. An illness puts more financial strain on the family and, emotionally, it was very hard as a single mum. On top of that, I was an immature mum – a great combination. Poor Kristy!



Becoming a Bricklayer's Labourer

I obtained work as a clerk typist before leaving to work in a factory as a labourer, since you get more money doing that sort of work. After a while, I got a job as a bricklayer's labourer. I worked only two or three days a week and, for about the first three months, I did not earn a wage. Way back then, I was only eight stone, so I had some growing to do and some serious fitness to acquire before I could be of use to my boss and earn a wage.

On my first day of work in Sydney, it was 40 degrees. One of my sisters, Diana, was working with me, and it was her first day, too; the boss was our friend. We left for work at 5am, driving one hour to the jobsite.

On the job, we had to move and stack brick after brick, then make mortar (mud) in the mixer. I remember being taught how to stand up on the wheelbarrow, legs spread on either side, and bending down to scoop the mud up onto my shovel before swinging the shovel up