



Inmate George Albert Venecia gestures to the first mural he painted in the day room of the health clinic at TRCI.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

ART: There have been novels published from behind bars

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Much of Venecia’s work has a tribal influence. He is working on an illustrated book about the creation story of his tribe, the Karuk tribe from northern California.

If he was published, he wouldn’t be the first inmate at TRCI to do so. TRCI spokesperson Sherry Iles said there have been novels published and artwork sold from behind bars before.

Venecia said he didn’t start painting until he landed in prison, something Iles said is common.

“So many times I say ‘This is amazing!’ and they say, ‘Yeah, I didn’t start until I came in here,’” she said, pointing to a wall of intricate colored pencil drawings in an area for visitors. “For me, if I take photos of what they’ve done, I give it to them for their portfolio for when they get out, for work opportunities.”

Venecia is one of TRCI’s residents who wants to make a career out of art someday. While his specialty is paint, others work with wood or metal or fabric.

In TRCI’s administration building right now, a collection of artwork is up for silent auction among staff to benefit the Agape House’s food bank. The art is mostly created by inmates in the facilities plant, who fabricate everything from metal lockers to book

“It’s really relaxing for them, and they do some amazing stuff.”

— Sherry Iles, TRCI spokesperson

shelves and in their spare time are allowed to use scraps for artwork.

In the administration building, a small motorcycle made of plumbing parts sits on a decorative wooden dresser. Nearby, scraps of metal weave themselves into an American flag picture frame while delicately carved walking sticks — unrecognizable as former mop handles — sit on the floor. There are even some colorful blankets made by members of TRCI’s crocheting class.

“It’s really relaxing for them, and they do some amazing stuff,” Iles said.

Venecia said he enjoys the process of spending months to create murals on walls, and the “calming effect” the art can have on those around him.

“If they wanted to paint over it, they could,” he said. “I love to paint so as long as I could paint it again, I couldn’t be upset.”

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Inmate George Albert Venecia painted curtains around the window of a staff office at TRCI.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris



A piece of metal art (above) and a wooden candle holder (right) created by inmates sit on display for a silent auction in a staff break room at TRCI.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris



Mini pizzas are an easy party pleaser

By KATIE WORKMAN
Associated Press

If you want to wow your gang during an Oscar viewing party, game day, or a movie-watching or Netflix-binging session, mini pizzas are a great way to go.

And no need to make this an all-day project; there are plenty of shortcuts to take. You could make your own pizza dough, but you could also buy it at the supermarket or a local pizzeria. You could make your own tomato sauce, but you could also buy a jar.

Then all that’s left are the toppings. You can prepare as many as you like, and then mix and match them on the pizzas.

Another thing that makes these pizzas easy: All of the toppings are uncooked. Chopping them finely allows them to cook quickly in the time it takes for the rest of the pizza to bake.

How much of each topping you’ll need for a batch of pizzas will depend on how many options you’re working with. You won’t need more than a pound of cheese total for one batch of mini pizzas (20), and 1 cup total of the toppings will surely suffice.

Don’t overload the pizzas with sauce, cheese or toppings — you don’t want things slipping and sliding off. These pizzas are meant to be just two-bite little affairs.



Carrie Crow via AP

Mini pizzas.

The cornmeal on the baking sheet serves two purposes. One, it adds a little crunch and texture to the bottoms of the little pizzas, and two, it helps them come off of the pan easily.

If you haven’t turned your oven to 500 degrees in a while, or ever, it might feel like a strangely high temperature. It’s OK. The high heat will cook the dough base quickly, resulting in as close to an approximation as possible of that chewy-on-the-outside,

tender-on-the-inside dough that you get in actual pizza joints, with their eyebrow-singeing hot ovens.

Slight caveat: These get inhaled pretty quickly, so count on at least four per person — more if my family is coming.

Katie Workman has written two cookbooks focused on easy, family-friendly cooking, “Dinner Solved!” and “The Mom 100 Cookbook.” She blogs at <http://www.themom100.com/about-katie-workman>.

MINI PIZZAS

45 minutes start to finish
Makes 20 pizzas (about five servings)

- 1 pound store-bought or homemade pizza dough
- 1 cup tomato sauce (such as a simple jarred pasta sauce)
- Cornmeal for sprinkling
- Shredded mozzarella
- Other shredded or crumbled cheeses, such as feta, cheddar, Monterey Jack, smoked mozzarella, fontina, gouda, Swiss-style cheeses
- Finely chopped red onion
- Finely chopped bell peppers or roasted peppers
- Finely chopped tomatoes
- Pepperoni, thinly sliced crosswise (or try different kinds of salami or cured meats)
- Chopped fresh oregano, or dried oregano
- Red pepper flakes

Bring the pizza dough to room temperature in a bowl, draped with some plastic wrap.

Preheat the oven to 500 degrees F. If you have parchment paper, line the baking sheets with that. Lightly oil the baking sheet or the parchment, or spray with nonstick cooking spray. Sprinkle the parchment or baking sheet lightly with cornmeal.

Divide the dough in half,

and then each half into halves again. Then divide each quarter into five pieces. This way your pizzas will all be close to the same size. Use a rolling pin to press each piece of dough into a flat circle about 2 inches in diameter and 1/8-inch thick; you can also press with your fingers, but a rolling pin is easier). Place them on the baking sheet and let sit for about 15 minutes.

Spoon about 1 teaspoon of sauce onto each round, spreading it almost to the edges. Sprinkle about 1 tablespoon of the cheese(s) of your choice over the pizzas. Top each one with 1 to 2 teaspoons of toppings, choosing the combo you like best. Sprinkle the pizzas with oregano and/or red pepper flakes as desired.

Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, until the dough is cooked through, and the cheese is melted and starts to turn golden brown. Remove from the oven, transfer to a serving platter, and serve hot or warm.

Nutrition information per serving: 244 calories; 139 calories from fat; 15 g fat (7 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 40 mg cholesterol; 799 mg sodium; 13 g carbohydrate; 1 g fiber; 1 g sugar; 12 g protein.