

BOAT UP, TAKE OUT

USVI cruisers will soon surround this boat, waiting for a slice of heaven to emerge.

By Brooke Morton

AT FIRST, IT WAS A PIPE dream, scribbled onto a cocktail napkin. Tara and Alexander Sasha Bouis were trying to find a niche. He taught sailing, and she, scuba. The couple worked in the sailing charter industry, but the hours — 24/7 for 10 months a year — were long. Enter the idea on the napkin. They'd refit a boat so, as Tara says, they could provide a necessity for boaters near St. Thomas: pizza.

● **Really, a pizza boat was your dream?** My husband is a total pizza snob from Manhattan, and he could never find good pizza here. We knew people might be wary of buying food from a boat, but pizza is friendly. ● **Why St. Thomas?** We couldn't get a trade license for the business, Pizza Pi, in the British Virgin Islands — we're not British. The next closest island is St. Thomas — we *are* U.S. citizens. If we didn't get accepted here, we'd keep sailing. ● **How did you**

find this boat? We searched three years for the right one. It needed a flat transom so we could cut a takeout window. And we needed a wide galley. We found *Pi* abandoned in Antigua. She was just a shell of a 37-footer, built by designer G.L. Watson out of Liverpool, England. Termites had eaten the entire wood interior. ● **Sounds like a rough start.** We lived on her during the 15-month rebuild process until we opened in November 2014. When we couldn't afford the dock



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LIFE OF PIZZA PI

Q: Most Unique Boat Feature
A: “There’s nothing like cutting a 4-foot square out of your stern to create a takeout window — that was one job I wouldn’t do. But once we made the takeout window, Pi’s fate as a pizza boat was sealed.”

Q: Most Unique Pizza
A: “The Thanksgiving pizza lives up to its name: cranberry sauce, Stove Top stuffing, pickled sweet corn and turkey. The acidity of the corn and the sweetness of the cranberry work well with the bird.”



fees, we anchored near the mangroves. ● **How did you turn the boat into a pizza kitchen?** We reverse-engineered it. We designed the menu first, then decided what equipment we'd need. We knew how many dough balls we'd have to make in one day, and how big the trays would be — those numbers dictated the size of the fridge. We built around details like that. ● **And now you attract a folla of boaters.** We have a big anchor,

which allows four or five boats to raft up while they wait for their pie, or they just hang out and eat. On holidays, including March 14 — aka “Pi Day” — we set another anchor for up to nine boats. ● **No delivery?** We have a delivery dinghy. It doubles as seating for our swim-up customers. ● **Running a food business out of a boat can't be easy.** You need good balance because of ferry wakes. Everything is always stowed, especially knives.

If something falls, like oil, it rolls around and makes a huge mess. ● **You're known as “Pizza Lady” around here.** When I get to introduce myself as Tara, and then talk turns to “what do you do for a living,” people always come back to, “Oh, that's you? Pizza lady!” ● **So how do boaters find you?** Radio channel 16, look us up at pizza-pi.com or just come out. We're anchored in Christmas Cove, east of St. Thomas. Remember, pizza is friendly. ●

ZACH STOVALL

It took more than a year for Tara and Sasha Bouis to turn an abandoned boat into a popular attraction near St. Thomas.