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# FOOD FANATICS®

FALL 2024

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Canned tomatoes are the backbone for pizza sauce and many pasta dishes. See story on page 10.

Missed opportunity? Some 48% of customers want a stuffed crust but only 21% of operators are obliging. Get more crust insight on page 30.

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# INSPIRATION FROM ITALY

Welcome to the Pizza and Pasta edition of Food Fanatics® Magazine!

The shift into a new season inspires us to bring something new and different to the familiar comforts we know and love in life. Consumers are no different, as diners seek to shake up their plate by exploring new flavors and twists to their favorite dishes. Which makes Italian food, a beloved mainstream global cuisine with ample dishes primed for personalization, the perfect focus of our Fall issue.

**Look towards approachable innovation.** In our cover story, "Ripe for Riffing," we look at how chefs around the country are bringing their own regional and cultural touchpoints to Italian favorites like lasagna, ravioli and Bolognese. "Exploring the Pizza Palette" chats with chefs using pizza as the perfect canvas for global flavors from a variety of diaspora, such as Mexico and the Middle East – merging American culture and their own ancestral backgrounds into each slice.

**The secret sauce is quality ingredients.** Quality is key when it comes to the foundation of many Italian dishes. "Up Your Crust" looks at the different pizza crust styles and what makes them shine, so no crust is left behind. "It's Reigning Cheese" explores the numerous varieties of excellent cheeses ready for today's diners who want to try something new. And in "Secret's in the Sauce," we look at why the almighty canned tomato is so important as the foundation of any tomato-based sauce, and how to choose the best can.

**Share your personal story on the plate.** Stuffed pasta is an ideal vehicle to share a culinary story. In "Shape Shifters," chefs share how they use stuffed pasta to offer a narrative to diners, conjuring a sense of place, honoring heritage and evoking playfulness on the plate. A twist on the traditional makes for a unique and personal menu item that shares more than just a dish itself.

We hope these tips and recipes bring a bounty of Italian inspiration to your table this season.

Thanks for reading,



Randy Taylor  
Executive Vice President,  
Field Operations and Local Sales  
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# Ripe for Riffing

American chefs bring global  
elements to Italian cuisine

By Bret Thorn

Photography by Matt Armendariz

Food styling by Adam Pearson

Prop styling by Amy Paliwoda





**Miguel Trinidad's chopped cheese raviolo, with sazon-seasoned meat and cheese, pays homage to his Dominican roots and his wife's Italian background at Marie's in Brooklyn, New York.**



Caprese salad gets a Southern play with fried green tomatoes.

## American consumers want to try something new—but not too new.

Take a dish that they're familiar with and add a twist—a local vegetable, a different style of pepperoni, an unexpected spice—and they're all over it.

That makes Italian food, the most mainstream of so-called “ethnic” cuisines, a perfect starting point for approachable innovation.

### Call of the South

Atlanta restaurateur Deborah VanTrece combines Italian and American soul food in some dishes at her restaurants, including ravioli in arrabbiata sauce—tomatoes, garlic and chilies cooked in olive oil—stuffed with Mississippi catfish at Twisted Soul Cookhouse & Pours.

At La Panarda, an Italian restaurant she closed earlier this year to focus on other projects, she turned a Kansas City soul food tradition of

fish and spaghetti into a more Italian dish: red snapper Bolognese. She sweated onions and bell peppers in olive oil followed by garlic and chopped snapper. Once the fish was cooked, she added stock, basil, granulated garlic, onion and marinara sauce, followed by liquid crab boil, Creole seasoning, Old Bay seasoning, salt and pepper, and let it simmer. She served it with angel hair pasta.

Nia Grace, the owner of Grace by Nia, a modern soul food restaurant with locations in Boston and the Foxwoods Resort Casino in Ledyard, Connecticut, also fuses soul food and Italian, using a fried green tomato as the base for caprese salad.

### Far East Reach

Wafu Italian, or Japanese-style Italian, is a veritable cuisine all its own in Japan that has also gained popularity in Italy and the United States.

Robbie Felice has seen success at PastaRamen, which he opened last year in

## Fried Green Tomatoes and Mozzarella

*Chef/owner Nia Grace  
Grace by Nia, Boston*

**½ cup vegetable oil**

**1 cup flour**

**1 cup cornmeal**

**Kosher salt and pepper, to taste**

**2 eggs, beaten**

**2 large green tomatoes, sliced into ½-inch rounds**

**4 ounces buffalo mozzarella, sliced**

**½ cup pickled red onions**

**¼ cup balsamic reduction**

**Basil oil, as needed**

**Heat** vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.

**Whisk** together flour, cornmeal, salt and pepper. Dredge each tomato slice in beaten eggs and then in the flour mixture, shaking off excess.

**Fry** in hot oil until golden brown and crispy, about 15 to 18 minutes per side. Drain.

**To assemble**, place a slice of buffalo mozzarella on top of each fried green tomato slice and grill under broiler to melt cheese, browning if preferred.

**Garnish** with pickled red onions, balsamic vinegar reduction and basil oil. Makes 2 servings.



The umami from Asian ingredients, such as soy sauce and miso, give an updated spin on lasagna. Scan the code for the recipe on Wafu Lasagna from page 4.



Monclair, New Jersey, after running it as a pop-up. Dishes included Japanese gyoza dumplings stuffed with Italian cacio e pepe sauce and spaghetti carbonara with Japanese sea urchin.

Adrian Cruz, former chef de cuisine of Alla Campagna in Fredericksburg, Texas, developed a Wafu lasagna using ground seasoned pork like the kind in a Japanese dumpling with miso, sesame oil, chiles and savory-sweet eel sauce combined with Italian cheeses, lasagna noodles and MSG.

At 1799 Kitchen & Cocktails in Franklin, Tennessee, Executive Sous Chef Kirstyn Bielawa took traditional panzanella, a bread salad from the Italian regions of Tuscany and Umbria, and gave it a southern flair by making it with cornbread.

Executive Chef Thomas Tuggle said the resulting dish is one of his favorites on the restaurant's summer menu. "It embodies all the best bits of summer produce and that Southern love of crispy cornbread," he says. "It's our Tennessee take on our Italian chef Kirstyn's

family classics. It hits all the notes: sweet, savory, salty, sour, umami. Each bite is a little bit different and sends you back wanting more."

### Getting Personal

When Miguel Trinidad, who is Dominican, opened Marie's in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn, New York, earlier this year, his goal was to offer more than a traditional Italian restaurant: He wanted to honor his wife's Italian family. "They pick vegetables from their garden, and we cook them within minutes of picking. I wanted to bring that freshness to the dishes at Marie's." He also "wanted to add a little bit of my heritage into it."

That desire resulted in a raviolo stuffed with meat, cheese and his rendition of sazón. "Sazón is a big part of Dominican culture," he says. "You can see the influence of Latin culture in the duck ropa vieja and the Caribbean influence of the neighborhood in our Jamaican beef ragu. Marie's is a love letter to Bushwick in New York City." ■



## HOW TO FUSE IT TOGETHER

All bets may be off for mingling cuisines, but it's still smart to avoid confusion. Some tips and watchouts from chefs:

### STICK WITH SIMPLE

A fried green tomato as the base for a caprese salad makes sense as a Southern spin on a classic Italian appetizer. Supporting components should complement, not complicate.

### KEEP IT FAMILIAR

Lasagna that includes meat seasoned with Japanese ingredients is relatable, but diners might be confused with the lesser-known timballo, a dish of baked pasta and meat.

### TAKE A TEST DRIVE

If you know your diners like spicy, turn out an arrabbiata version of a menu item, whether it's a sauce, topping for a burger, side dish or vegetable.

### INFUSE YOU

If you head an American concept and your heritage or someone meaningful to you has an immigrant background, think of an "ode to" adaptation of a dish. Include background in the menu description.

### DON'T FORGET THE DRINKS

The beverage options of every cuisine are plentiful, from housemade cocktails to beer and wine, and they can complement the direction of the fusion dishes while increasing check averages.



PastaRamen melds Japanese with Italian via cacio e pepe gyoza, left, and uni ramen carbonara.





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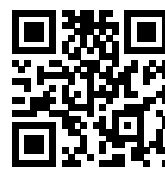


**Secret's in the**

# **SAUCE**

***It begins with the almighty canned tomato***

By Amber Gibson  
Photography by Matt Armendariz  
Food styling by Adam Pearson  
Prop styling by Amy Paliwoda



A tomato-based sauce with pasta and chicken score with value and profitability. Scan the code for this Chicken Cacciatore recipe.





# Tomato-based sauces

are where Italian cuisine started for Americans and continued to thrive as pizza and pasta grew and evolved. Signature red sauces are the stuff of Nonna memories for many chefs, but they almost always start with canned tomatoes.

## Choosing the Right Can

Making tomato sauce with canned tomatoes saves on labor and cost of ingredients. Plus, it allows for consistency, especially when tomatoes are out of season, and a balance between sweetness and acidity. The key, chefs say, is to find a brand that is in line with food costs and meets your quality standards. Look for canned tomatoes that are picked fully ripened from the vine for optimal flavor, especially for raw tomato sauce on pizza. Alta Cucina, Dinapoli, Pomi, Roseli, San Marzano, and Stanislaus are among chef favorites.

Executive Chef Sam Dickstein uses Alta Cucina whole peeled plum tomatoes for the base of all red sauces at RPM Italian Chicago based on flavor and the simple ingredient list. “We start out with (our brand of) tomatoes and slowly stew them with sweet Spanish onions, roasted garlic, salt, sugar and basil,” he says. “This sauce is 100% the backbone of this restaurant and makes up our signature pomodoro sauce that is used in all of our red

sauce dishes.” He leaves the sauce a little chunkier for chicken Parmesan, but blends it more smoothly to dress arancini, eggplant Parmesan and spaghetti and meatballs.

Dickstein even uses this pomodoro sauce with roasted tomatoes and pickled peppers on pizzettes rather than a traditional raw tomato sauce. “We do this to add more dimension and some spice to our pizzettes, and cooking the sauce allows the sugars to cook down and provide a nice balance to the spicy peppers.”

Chef Glenn Rolnick of the iconic Carmine’s restaurant in New York prefers San Marzano plum tomatoes as a starting point. “The puree helps with the finished texture, color and flavor after the cooking process as well as the density we are looking for,” he says.

And Executive Chef Nick Dugan of Charleston’s Sorelle recommends pomodorini cherry tomatoes. “They cook really well and more quickly develop a rich umami blast that San Marzano tomatoes are known for,” he says.

**"These tomatoes are one of our secret weapons and instantly transport me to Liguria every time I taste them."**

—Chef Michael Gulotta, Tana, New Orleans





Canned or fresh cherry tomatoes can top Snapper alla Piastra and accent the sauce. Scan the code for the recipe.





### Taking it up a notch

Rolnick often adds additional ingredients like porcini or cremini mushrooms, broccoli rabe or rapini, Italian or turkey sausage, cannellini beans and hot Italian peppers to his base tomato sauce depending on the dish. But, he says, a great tomato sauce is essential to many bestsellers like penne alla boscaiola, seafood fra diavolo, veal Parmigiana and chicken cacciatore. Carmine's sells its marinara, vodka, tomato basil and fra diavolo sauces online and in thousands of supermarkets across the tri-state and mid-Atlantic areas.

At Nunzio in Collingswood, New Jersey, Chef Michael DeLone adds a generous dollop of whipped ricotta atop his fettuccine Bolognese made with his own canned tomato sauce. "There's nothing better than a silky, almost foamy ricotta dollop on top of anything," he says. "In the fettuccine's case, it cuts the strong flavor of the meat sauce, and similar to egg whites helping chocolate become a mousse, the ricotta turns what would be a very heavy dish into something a little lighter and more sophisticated."

Tomato sauce gets a Creole twist at Tana in New Orleans, inspired by Chef Michael Gulotta's Sicilian heritage and upbringing in Louisiana. "We caramelize peppers and garlic in olive oil, add a touch of tomato paste and raw sugar, and caramelize that as well, then we throw in a smoked pork hock and the canned tomatoes with some fresh basil and let it simmer," he says. "We also sneak in a spoonful of miso to add depth." He serves this red gravy with braised meatballs and sourdough focaccia as well as in a radiatori pasta with warm stracciatella and Calabrian chili crisp.

For his pesto Trapanese, which is served with red snapper, Gulotta uses oven-dried tomatoes, saffron and citrus-marinated tomatoes. He contrasts the tomato-based pesto, which is spooned over the top of the snapper, with a bright pop of basil aioli under the filet.

"These tomatoes are one of our secret weapons and instantly transport me to Liguria every time I taste them," he says. ■

## TO-MAY-TO, TO-MAH-TOH

All bets are off when it comes to the ease and versatility of canned tomatoes versus fresh. Still, certain factors should be considered:

### ● KNOW YOUR TOMATO

San Marzano tomatoes are low-moisture plum tomatoes, but the ubiquitous Roma has a higher acidity and is not as jammy or sweet as the San Marzano. Also consider round tomatoes but the best choice depends on price point and application.

### ● LESS IS MORE

Many brands include basil, which can save on labor, but you'll have better control of the flavor by customizing your own seasonings.

### ● GET THE MOST FLAVOR

Draining whole or diced canned tomatoes of their juices will aid in caramelizing and concentrating flavors. Add the juices after sauteing with mirepoix.

### ● CONSIDER USE

Whole peeled tomatoes are the closest to fresh, but some chefs prefer puree, chopped, stewed, chunky and other tomatoes depending on the application.

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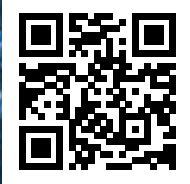


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# IT'S REIGNING CHEESE

Go big on this dairy to win over diners

By Heather Sennett

■ **A tremendous variety** of cheese styles gives chefs an abundance of culinary riches to innovate and explore considering that several thousand types of traditional cheeses are produced in the U.S. and Italy.

From rich, nutty Asiago to a lighter Valtellina Casera, to soft and pungent gorgonzola and the iconic Parmigiano-Reggiano, cheese can have a home in every day part and every section of the menu. In fact, 56% of operators say an item sells better when they add cheese, according to food

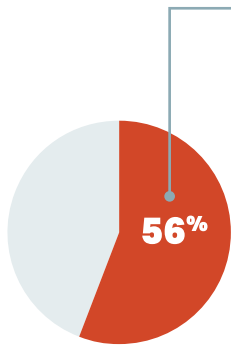
research firm Datassential. The firm's data shows Parmesan is the most popular followed by cheddar and then mozzarella, but the fastest-growing include Asiago, stracchino and burrata.

Chefs, however, are partial to brands they can count on for flavor and quality, such as Roseli's premium mozzarella and Grande Cheese Company's stracchiarella and burrata. They're also stepping up their game with cheeses served on their own or in inventive blends for flavor and better food costs.

## One cheese, many uses

"The mother of cheeses for me is ricotta," says Michael Taus, executive chef of the Wit Chicago, a Hilton hotel that includes a tavern, rooftop restaurant and bar, as well as banquets and in-room dining. "Making lasagna is an art. And having the perfect ricotta is the start."

Taus uses a ricotta that's packaged with mesh inside the container to drain the water, leaving a creamy cheese that his kitchen further strains in a chinois. The chefs then whip the ricotta with herbs, lemon zest, honey



**Operators who say an item sells better when they add cheese.**

Source: Datassential

and a bit of Parmesan for acidity and bite. “It’s a staple in some of the things we do,” he says, from pizzas and bruschetta to avocado toast and a rigatoni dish.

Plus, using one product so many ways, especially a fresh cheese that is relatively low-cost, helps with margins, Taus says.

### Amore for Southern Italy

Just as Calabrian chili peppers seem to be everywhere, so, too, do the cheeses of Southern Italy, says Executive Chef Steve Chiappetti of Chicago’s Hotel EMC2, home to Italian-inspired restaurant The Albert.

“And when you’re talking about Southern cheeses, you’re talking about a little bit more aged cheese, a little bit saltier,” Chiappetti says. “More like the provolone or scamorza. Goat cheese is also coming back in fashion.”

Chiappetti prefers working with an aged goat cheese that has a crumbly texture and sharper flavor than a just-made variety. He features the cheese in a beet salad, on pizza and as a ravioli filling, and it has even made its way into desserts.

Chiappetti has found several cheesemakers in the U.S. who are doing fine work, debunking old-school thinking that cheese must be imported to be good.”

“When I ran Spiaggia, it was always like, ‘If we’re doing Italian, it must be authentic. It’s got to be flown in from Italy,’” he says. “When it comes to cheeses, it’s not a sustainable way of managing the menu or the kitchen. We’re not in Italy.”

The fuel costs and environmental impact of shipping cheeses from Italy needs to be reconciled with overall food costs, seeing that excellent producers exist in Wisconsin and other states, Chiappetti says.



#### RICOTTA

A kitchen workhorse, this cheese adds creaminess to pizza and pasta, but its mild flavor is also handy for conveying flavor via herbs, spices, zest or grated cheeses.

#### RICOTTA SALATA

Made from sheep’s milk whey, this cheese is pressed, aged and salted, resulting in a crumbly texture ideal as a salty complement to pizza, pasta and salads.

#### DOLCE GORGONZOLA

Sweeter and milder than ubiquitous blue cheese, dolce\_gorgonzola, which hails from Lombardy and Piedmont, is having a moment on pasta and pizza.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT ARMENDARIZ. FOOD STYLING BY ADAM PEARSON. PROP STYLING BY AMY PALIWODA



#### AGED GOAT CHEESE

The aged version offers a sharper flavor than the just-made variety. Chefs are using it as a contrasting flavor, adding it to pizza, to pasta and as a filling for stuffed pasta.

#### PARMIGIANO-REGGIANO

With the rind stamped for authenticity, this aged Parmesan is complex and savory, which is reflected in its price. Best as a finishing cheese or blended with other hard cheeses for affordability.

#### SCAMORZA

A spun/stretched cheese known as pasta filata, scamorza, which hails from Southern Italy, has a semi-soft texture that's like a firm mozzarella. For a richer texture and earthier flavor profile, look for scamorza made with sheep's and cow's milk.



#### AGED PROVOLONE

With a more complex flavor and sharper taste than other semi-hard cheeses, aged provolone is often relied on to provide more personality to a dish.

#### PECORINO

The generic term for a hard, salty cheese made with sheep's milk, it varies in flavor depending on its origin, from Romano and Toscano to Sardo and Siciliano.





Ricotta appears on **86.5%** of Italian menus, but expect it to appear more frequently on other types thanks to its creaminess and beneficial price point.

Source: Datassential

**“The mother of cheeses for me is ricotta. Making lasagna is an art. And having the perfect ricotta is the start.”**

—Michael Taus, executive chef of theWit Chicago

### Going with whole-cheese cooking

Move over, nose-to-tail cooking. It's time to make room for rind-to-center cheese use, says Andrea Marchesin, the Italian-born executive chef of Miami's Toscana Divino Hospitality Group.

“What we like to do right now is transform the texture of the cheese by using the entire product,” he says. Marchesin reworked the classic dish cacio e pepe with risotto under that philosophy, simmering the crusts of Parmigiano-Reggiano in broth for up to 14 hours. The cheese broth is left to decant like wine in the walk-in overnight. The fat is then removed and whipped with some Parmigiano-Reggiano butter. The remaining cheese broth is used in making the risotto.

### Be savvy about blends

Before combining Italian cheeses in dishes, chefs say it's important to have a deep understanding of the flavor profile and behavior of each cheese on its own.

Marchesin, for example, likes to mix two types of pecorino, a hard, salty, sheep's milk cheese. He'll use the Romano variety, which is salty, cut with some milder pecorino Toscano and a bit of Grana Padano. “The three of them, in this combination, create a nice texture,” he says.

For pizzas, Chiappetti creates layers of flavor, starting with provolone as a base and adding mild gorgonzola dolce, ricotta salata or goat cheese. “It's all cheeses with a creamier cheese base,” he says. “Drier cheese, when you bake it, it doesn't melt. It stays intact. So, when you eat it, you're getting these sharp bites of cheese goodness.”

Chefs can also look to blends, including mozzarella, to help with food costs. Combining pricier Parmesan with comparatively less expensive pecorino creates a new flavor while also saving money. “It's really about cost efficiency,” Chiappetti says. “There's other options that can be blended in to cut costs and still give you that edge that you're looking for.”

Pre-shredded or grated cheese blends also save on labor and provide a flavor difference that can set a dish apart from the competition. ■

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# TREND TRACKER

## ON THE RADAR



### Bone-In.

Beef bone marrow found a home on menus; now, swordfish marrow is headed for land.

**Last seen:** Chef Logan Kendall serves swordfish bone marrow in an oyster shell with green strawberry mignonette for a refreshing, jelly-like and collagen-rich starter at Cellar Hand in San Diego.

## HIGH ALERT



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF ENSO

### Marching On.

Twists on Southern classics will cross state lines just like the originals.

**Last seen:** Executive Chef Lawrence Weeks from Ensō in Louisville serves octopus hushpuppies, a merger of the Southern snack with popular Japanese street food takoyaki.

## FADING OUT



### Long Meals.

What do you get when a lengthy tasting menu is combined with increasingly shorter attention spans? No fun.

**Try this instead:** Fine dining tasting-menu-only spots like Chicago's Esmé and San Francisco's Anomaly recently launched abbreviated tasting menus available at the bar or on weekdays to encourage more frequent dining for local guests.



### Next-level Umami.

Kelp flakes amp up everything from avocado toast and eggs to slow-roasted fish, while kelp powder is swirled into dips, marinades, pasta dough and baked goods for a briny burst of umami.



### Skip Ahead.

Preordering signature dishes with limited availability can maximize revenue and minimize food waste.

**Last seen:** Michelin-starred Camphor in Los Angeles implemented a preorder system for labor-intensive specialties like whole Dover sole and short rib bourguignon by texting guests several days in advance, so the kitchen knows how much to prep each evening.



### Toeing the Line.

Shrugging off long customer waits isn't hospitality.

**Try this instead:** Compensate with a low-food-cost tasting portion from the menu or follow up with an email to return on a slower night for a percentage off the check or a complimentary dessert.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVEN ROJAS

### Ready to Blow.

Stuffed pasta that erupts with gooey cheese? Yes, please.

**Last seen:** Chef Adam Leonti of Cucina Alba in New York forms a volcano-shaped hump in the middle of each ravioli that oozes with mozzarella into a pool of melted butter, aged balsamic and grated Parmesan. See more on filled pasta on page 52.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAURENT TROUNDEL HOSPITALITY

### Snack Pacts.

Inventive snacks and creative cocktails that play off one another are filling an underused space.

**Last seen:** At Back Bar in New York City, Chef Laurent Troundel and Beverage Director Jason Hedges collaborate to ensure bar snacks, cocktails and nonalcoholic drinks are in sync.



### Package Nostalgia.

Chef Aidan Owens at Herb & Sea in Encinitas, California, serves a "happy meal" for weekday happy hour with a smash burger, oyster trio, fries and glass of sparkling wine for \$20. Trim from in-house butchering helps keep prices in check.



### Second-Life Sourdough.

Leftover starter finds new life in crackers, cakes, muffins and even cookies, giving baked goods tang and leaving operators feeling good about reducing waste.



### Restaurant Surcharges.

Customers are fed up with unexpected fees, and states like California are banning arbitrary restaurant surcharges outright.

**Try this instead:** Shift any surcharges to menu prices, and despite the increase, customers will appreciate the transparency.



### Ho-hum Collabs.

The giant housemade Cheez-It at New York's Greywind is fun, but there's more to hooking up.

**Try this instead:** The Cheeto Shishitos at Atlanta's Ranger Station cocktail lounge is cheeky and ambitious, blistering shishitos in beef tallow and topping with housemade Cheeto seasoning, lime crema and cotija cheese. Just be careful about calling out trademark brands.

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AWAY FROM HOME

# Role Play

Dressing can take on just about any part



Cross-utilization comes into play by amping up whipped ricotta with Italian dressing and herbs for roasted carrots garnished with spiced pistachios.

## Of all the ingredients in the back of the house, one product can cross-utilize like no other: **dressing.**

“Chefs naturally want to break things down to build them up into new concepts,” says Laura Vaughn, who is head of culinary for Kraft Heinz and has logged time working in fine dining kitchens. “We understand that ingredients all have a function and how they work together as well as the characteristics each ingredient brings to the party. So, in thinking about dressings, we know that they usually have a fat, an acid, a flavor and often an emulsifier for binding ingredients together. These components are also great enhancements to a whole host of foods besides salads.”

A dressing’s attributes also make it a kitchen workhouse, cutting labor and improving profits. Follow along with how-tos and tips to ensure success.

### 1. Build Flavor

Dressing works as a marinade to carry flavor, whether to proteins or vegetables. In the process, the acid acts as a tenderizer and helps retain moisture. It also makes roasted vegetables pop and brings out other characteristics in ingredients, including cheese and fruit. “Add to that how easy it is to personalize a purchased salad dressing to make your own unique recipes and you’ve got a superstar ingredient that can work across your menu. A perfect example of how the sum is greater than its parts,” Vaughn says.

### 2. Make It Interactive

Customers today want to maximize their dining experience, whether it’s visually (a menu item accompanied by sauces) or



Dressings, such as Catalina, French or Ranch, provide the fat and acid to expand beyond traditional uses.

physically (compiling components at the table). Dressings can do double duty by acting as a dipping sauce or a customizable foundation.

“We know that diners love to dip, dunk and squeeze sauces for a personalized dining experience. We launched our innovative Heinz Dip & Squeeze sauce packets for just that reason—so diners had the option to squeeze their sauce over a burger or fries or dip their food into it,” Vaughn says.

### 3. Go for Nostalgia

If there’s one trend that’s a mainstay, it’s evoking food memories. “Ranch dressing is a nostalgic, creamy, salty, herby explosion of flavor in your mouth. The tangy buttermilk is balanced by the richness of the mayo;

it enhances everything you pour it on. It’s addictive,” Vaughn says. “Coupled with the numerous ways to personalize it—more herbs, spicy jalapeno or buffalo, creamy avocado—the variations are endless, as are the ways diners find to enjoy it.”

### 4. Maximize Versatility

Yes, pair ketchup with fries, but dressings of all kinds provide a more flavorful balance against that addictive fatty crunch of deep-fried food. “In fine dining, savory vinaigrettes are often served as a sauce for beautifully sauteed or grilled seafood. Dressings can be used as a spread on sandwiches, such as a caprese tomato, burrata and basil layered onto a crispy toasted ciabatta roll—a beautiful pesto



Customize an aioli for fried foods like arancini by combining ingredients, such as fan favorite Ranch dressing, herbs and lemon.

mayo or an herby vinaigrette mingles with the tomato juices and softens the toasted bread just enough for an amazing bite,” Vaughn says.

She also recommends dressings as the glue to hold coatings on food, such as slathering a flavored mayonnaise over a chicken breast or fish filet, coating with cornflakes or other low-sugar breakfast cereal and sauteing or deep frying. Blend dressing into softened butter for a rich garnish on grilled meat or vegetables. Use a vinaigrette as a flavorful oil to roast chickpeas, nuts or vegetables. “Dressings and

vinaigrettes can provide flavor and a much-needed fattiness when eating meatless burgers, making them truly satisfying instead of often just the healthy option,” Vaughn says.

### 5. Customize

Adding one or two ingredients into a premade dressing results in a tailored menu that fits theme and budget. Stir hummus and cumin into an Italian vinaigrette and garnish with spice-roasted chickpeas, Vaughn recommends. Adding tomato paste and smoked paprika

**“We know that diners love to dip, dunk and squeeze sauces for a personalized dining experience.**

—Laura Vaughn, head of culinary for Kraft Heinz

equates to a smoky roasted tomato vinaigrette. “Mayonnaise accepts almost any flavorful addition, such as pesto, pureed roasted red bell peppers, or grilled and chopped poblano peppers. Add a squeeze of lime juice or chopped herbs. A fruit puree or even a little sugar and vinegar can transform mayonnaise into dozens of sauces and is a great way to use ingredients with a shorter shelf life. Marketing your flavored mayonnaise as an aioli is a surefire way to upsell a side of fries,” she says.

### 6. Watch Outs

Dressings can pop up across the menu as long their limitations are recognized. The acid in vinaigrettes tenderizes meats, but when they marinate too long, the meat’s protein structure can break down and shift from tender to mushy and unpleasant. Vinaigrettes that separate can be tricky for servers to portion onto salads or into dip cups if they don’t stir the dressing every time they portion it. And mixing very rich or fatty ingredients into a mayonnaise can sometimes break the emulsion because of the imbalance of fat to liquid.

“However, once you make this mistake you learn quickly how to avoid making the same mistake again,” Vaughn says. ■



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SCAN TO SHOP NOW





# Up Your Crust

The base  
delivers a pie  
for the win

By Amber Gibson  
Photography by Matt Armendariz  
Food styling by Adam Pearson  
Prop styling by Amy Paliwoda

**Ask consumers** to name a preferred type of pizza, and chances are the crust comes into play. More than a base, the crust defines pizza by its ingredients, such as the type of flour (high-protein or gluten-free), leavening (sourdough or yeast), thickness (pan pizza or cracker crust) and style (Neapolitan, New York, Detroit and others).

While 51% of operators stick to one type of crust, offering more could increase sales, according to the Datassential 2024 pizza survey. Partially baked and premade crust—or even flatbread—can take a load off labor, but chefs say it's best to consider all the components first. Great toppings, says the Datassential survey, are the most important factor in determining a great pizza, followed by crust and then sauce. When the crust component is stellar, there's less waste and plates return to the kitchen clean.

## DETROIT

### Carries loads of toppings

This rectangular pan pizza has a thick chewy crust traditionally topped with caramelized cheese, and at Kobo in Seattle, Chef/owner Shota Nakajima uses semolina flour and popcorn butter in his dough and tops it with shredded mozzarella and Monterey Jack cheeses. "When I make grilled cheese sandwiches, the cheese chip that melts and solidifies on the side of the pan is my favorite part, and we focus on making sure there is a nice crunch by using Monterey Jack cheese around the edge," he says. Nakajima loves carb-heavy Detroit pizza because the dough retains a nice moisture level and can hold up well to a boatload of toppings.

## SICILIAN

### Light and airy

Chef Steven Chiappetti of the Albert in Chicago is after a focaccia-like crust that's associated with the less common Sicilian-style pizza. "The crust is fermented overnight to let the yeast wake up and grow, producing that airiness on the inside and a nice crunch to the outside," he says. Cheese for a Sicilian-style pizza also varies from traditional pizza styles. Goat's milk or an aged cow's milk—like provolone or scamorza—is more likely. Sicilian pizzas are also topped with fresh crushed tomato or white sauce, rather than the thicker and smoother varieties. "It's not too dense, and it's not a dairy overload either," he says.

Using the right flour is important with Sicilian pizza, and Chiappetti recommends a strong wheat flour. "The dough should feel soft and a little tacky," he says. He rests the dough in a tightly covered container for 24 hours before it's ready to fold and spread into a sheet pan for toppings.



## ROMAN

### Less edge, cracker-like texture

Executive Chef Wyatt Keith uses the same dough for Neapolitan and Roman pizza styles at Hotel Healdsburg's PizZando. But the dough balls for Roman-style pizzas are only two-thirds as big as for Neapolitan—200 grams versus 300 grams. "How you stretch the pizza is really important," he says. "Neapolitan is the classic hand-tossed

pizza style, with a large puffy crust that has lots of caramelization. For those who want as little crust as possible, I recommend the Roman style, rolled very thin with toppings placed almost to the edge of the pizza. The dough is loosely poked with holes before baking to prevent steam from building up and creating large pockets of air, and the result is a thin, cracker-like pizza with very little crust around the edge."



## GO FOR IT

Potential opportunities and the statistics to back them up:

### STAT

**48%** of consumers want stuffed-crust pizza, but only **21%** of operators offer it.

### OPP

Run a special to gauge diner interest and be sure to promote it.



### STAT

**21%** of consumers want pizza as a dessert, a trend on the rise, but only **17%** of operators are offering.

### OPP

Try it as a special first to see how it sells. Zeneli's in New Haven, Connecticut, serves a dessert pizza stuffed with Nutella accompanied by strawberries and garnished with powdered sugar.

Source: Datassential

**“The taste is different from our traditional sourdough, but we can make a light, crispy and airy option that I am proud of.”**

*—Executive Chef Kyle Stamps, Mother Pizzeria, Newport, Rhode Island, on his gluten-free crust*

## GLUTEN-FREE

### Evolved and improved

At Mother Pizzeria, Executive Chef Kyle Stamps offers yeasted gluten-free crust made with Caputo Fioreglut flour, which has gluten-removed but still contains some wheat. “We make almost like a focaccia with it, using a good amount of olive oil and baked in a pan to prevent cross-contamination.” Stamps has seen a demand from customers for gluten-free and was inspired to make a tastier homemade one with the help of a team member who eschews gluten. “The taste is different from our traditional sourdough, but we can make a light, crispy and airy option that I am proud of.”

## Gluten-Free Sourdough Crust

*Executive Chef Kyle Stamps  
Mother Pizzeria, Newport, Rhode Island*

**950 grams tepid water**

**20 grams dry active yeast**

**25 grams kosher salt**

**1000 grams gluten-free flour, such as  
Caputo Fioreglut**

**50 grams extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra  
for drizzling**

In the bowl of a stand mixer, add water and yeast. Let sit for 10 minutes until frothy. Add remaining ingredients. Using the hook attachment, mix for 8 minutes or until fully combined.

**Portion** out dough and stretch into 12-inch circles. Drizzle olive oil over the top, cover with plastic wrap and proof for 45 minutes. Top with preferred ingredients and bake in preheated 450 F oven for 15 minutes or desired temperature and time.





## PizZando's Pizza Dough

*Executive Chef Wyatt Keith  
Hotel Healdsburg, Healdsburg, California*

**5 kg tipo 1 flour**  
**5 kg Petra 5063 flour (tipo 0)**  
**50 grams yeast**  
**7 kg water, divided use**  
**2 kg 00 flour**  
**300 grams sea salt**  
**300 grams extra-virgin olive oil**

**Mix** Type1 flour, 5063 flour, yeast and 5 kg water until dough forms a shaggy mass. Refrigerate and let proof overnight.

**Place** pre-fermented dough back into the mixer and add 2 kg 00 flour and remaining 2 kg water, mix for 10 minutes on low until dough is fully hydrated and elastic.

**Add** salt and continue to mix on low, slowly adding olive oil until fully incorporated.

**Mix** on medium speed for another 10 minutes. Remove dough from mixer and portion into balls at 300 grams for Neapolitan pizzas (thicker) and 200 grams for Roman pizzas (thinner).

## SOURDOUGH/NEO-NEAPOLITAN

### **Chewy and crispy**

Achieving the “right chew and crisp balance” is worth the three-day dough process, says Tyler Fenton, chef and restaurateur at Reilly Craft Pizza & Drink in Tucson, Arizona. He uses a blend of five flours, including local whole grain, white Sonoran, wheat, red fife and other stone-ground and organic flours.

“The blend of flours was developed to give the dough enough strength for our extended fermentation and to have the right chew and crisp balance,” he says. Fenton begins with a 24-hour yeast pre-ferment as the base, followed by a cold bulk fermentation for one to three days. After it’s portioned and gets a 24-hour chilled rest, the dough comes to room temperature at least five hours before service. Fenton sees the dough as neo-Neapolitan. “We have a longer bake time than classic Neapolitan,

giving the dough more structure with a crisp yet tender crumb, a pleasant chew and nice acidity from the extended fermentation,” he says.

Stamps also makes a sourdough pizza at Mother Pizzeria in Newport, Rhode Island, with stone-ground flour from a local mill. He considers his pizza a cross between Neapolitan and New York-style. “We try to bring the best of both worlds—a crispy bottom that stays crispy and also is light and chewy.”

Stamps fires his pizza at 650 degrees to create that ideal texture. “We shoot for a final dough temperature of 74 degrees. This lets the fermentation get going, but not too quickly. Let the dough guide you. Does it need a little more mixing or a few more folds for strength? The more you practice and work with it, the better and easier it gets, and you can start to recognize the signs.” ■

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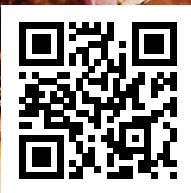
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# EXPLORING THE PIZZA PALETTE

**CREATING PIES WITH A WORLD VIEW**

By Amber Gibson  
Photography by Matt Armendariz  
Food styling by Adam Pearson  
Prop styling by Amy Paliwoda



Just about any cuisine can capitalize on the popularity and beneficial food cost of pizza. Scan the code for the recipe on Chicken Tikka Masala Pizza.



## GLOBAL PIZZA LAST SEEN

### • ELOTE

Roasted corn, poblano peppers, housemade cilantro lime mayo, cotija cheese and red chili salt

*Dimo's, Chicago*

### • CHICKEN TAWOOK

Marinated and diced chicken with garlic paste, cheese, peppers and jalapenos

*Alforon, San Diego*

### • LADY ZAZA

Plum tomato sauce, Korean sausage, napa kimchi, gochujang, scallion and sesame

*Pizzeria Lola, Minneapolis*

### • PHO SHIZZLE

Chicken, red bell peppers, caramelized onions, hoisin, sriracha basil and cilantro

*Zalat Pizza, multiple locations, Texas*

■ **Smoked** salmon, barbecue chicken and pineapple with ham on pizza raised eyebrows when chefs first started innovating pies in the early '80s, but those toppings laid the groundwork for a global canvas. Imports from Japan and India are making the biggest splash, and just about any ingredient (hot honey and 'nduja) from any diaspora, such as Mexico and the Middle East, are landing on pies.

Why? It's simple: During four decades, children raised by immigrants have been cooking through the lens that merges America and their ancestral background. Here's how they're capturing the palates of diners who grew up with a similar experience.

### East Meets West

Chef Shota Nakajima serves Detroit-style pizza with a Japanese flair at Kobo Pizza in Seattle. Unique toppings range from miso-roasted mushrooms to Japanese fried chicken with nori ranch and koji hot sauce. His best-selling Dodger pizza (named after his border collie) features teriyaki-braised short ribs, tonkatsu tomato sauce and a Kewpie-based egg aioli. "This, for me, is the perfect mix of Japanese flavors on a pizza," he says. "My favorite part

## Wise Quacker

*Executive Chef Kyle Stamps  
Mother Pizzeria, Newport, Rhode Island*

- 50 grams grapeseed oil
- 50 grams ginger, grated
- 35 grams garlic, grated
- 160 grams low sodium soy sauce
- 80 grams rice wine vinegar
- 80 grams sugar
- 225 grams fermented black bean, rinsed, soaked overnight, drained
- Duck fat or additional grapeseed oil
- 3 large onions, sliced as needed
- 20 grams hoisin, plus extra for garnishing
- 5 grams toasted sesame oil
- Gluten-free pizza dough (see recipe on page 33)
- 70 grams fresh mozzarella
- 100 grams duck confit, your recipe
- 75 grams banh mi vegetables, recipe follows
- Cilantro leaves, as needed

In a small rondeau, heat grapeseed oil and sweat ginger and garlic until translucent and tender. Add soy sauce, vinegar, sugar and black beans. Cook until beans are tender and sauce is thick. Set aside.

**Heat** duck fat or any fat and caramelize onion until deep brown. Add 20 grams hoisin and sesame oil. Set aside.

**Dollop** 40 grams fermented black bean sauce around the pizza dough. Tear the fresh mozzarella into pieces no larger than the tip of your thumb, spread evenly on dough followed by 35 grams caramelized onion and duck confit. Bake at 650 F for 3 to 4 minutes. Top with vegetables, drizzle with hoisin and garnish with cilantro.

**To make banh mi vegetables:** Julienne 80 grams daikon radish and 80 grams carrot and combine with 5 grams thinly sliced and seeded serrano pepper. Add 5 grams sugar and 3 grams salt, let sit for 10 minutes. Cover with enough rice wine vinegar and macerate overnight at room temperature.





East meets West at Kobo where Chef Shota Nakajima's Dodger Pizza features teriyaki-braised short ribs, tonkatsu tomato sauce and a Kewpie-based egg aioli.





of Detroit-style pizza is that you can add a lot of flavors and it holds up well. I braise short ribs using no sodium, so it gets extremely soft and is dog-safe so I can give Dodger the edges.” Monterey Jack cheese tops the crust, pushed tightly up against the edges for a super-crunchy contrast with the melt-in-your-mouth short ribs.

At Mother Pizzeria in Newport, Rhode Island, Executive Chef Kyle Stamps serves a banh mi-inspired Wise Quacker pizza with duck confit, caramelized onion, fermented black bean, pickled vegetables and sesame oil. “Using a rich meat, such as duck confit, and pairing it with pickled vegetables is a match made in heaven,” he says. “We round it out with sesame-spiked hoisin and freshly picked cilantro. If something is good on a sandwich, it is most likely going to be good on a pizza; you just need to find the balance.”

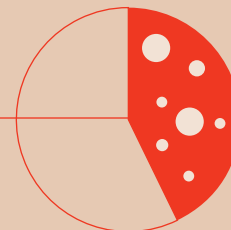
### Call of India

Indian pizzerias have taken off in the past few years, including James Beard-nominated sports bar Pijja Palace in Los Angeles, where customers can choose white korma, peri peri vindaloo or northern Makhani sauce rather than tomato sauce. Toppings include tandoori onions and housemade Goan sausage. Curry Pizza House currently has more than two dozen locations across five states, with another dozen slated to open. Diners choose between classic Italian renditions and 17 types of curry inspirations ranging from butter chicken to aloo gobi.

Curry Pizza House Founder Gursewalk Gill arrived in the United States from Punjab, India, with ambitious dreams to open a restaurant. He and his wife began experimenting with incorporating Indian spices into traditional American pizzas during their household pizza night tradition, and Gill recognized an opportunity to share a culinary experience that intertwined his native and adopted homes.

## GO FOR IT

Potential opportunities and the statistics to back them up:

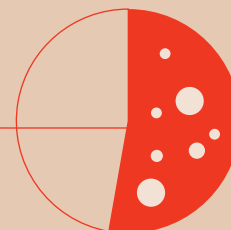


### STAT

43% of consumers will order more pizza than they need for a meal to ensure leftovers.

### OPP

Offer incentives to order more, such as a percentage off the price during the week or on slower nights.




### STAT

52% of customers are not enrolled in a loyalty program but 43% are using coupons and loyalty rewards more often than the previous year. This trend will likely continue.

### OPP

Launch a rewards program and support it on your website, on your social media platforms and through your staff. Offer an introductory incentive.

Source: Datassential



**“PIZZA IS A CLEVER WAY TO INTRODUCE INTERNATIONAL INGREDIENTS AND FLAVORS INTO AN APPROACHABLE FOOD THAT EVERYONE CAN RELATE TO.”**

—Scott Weiner, co-owner of Roots Pizza in Chicago



**Taco pizza from Roots Pizza, proving that the humble pie can go global.**

“When deciding which Indian dishes to translate into pizzas, we consider factors such as flavor compatibility,” he says. “A dish like the chili paneer pizza works well because the paneer, also known as Indian cottage cheese, offers a mellow cheesiness that complements the bold flavors and vibrant colors of its masala spices and curry sauce. Meanwhile, the smoky, spicy flavors of tandoori chicken add depth to the traditional pizza.”

Chef Jay Jadeja, born and raised in Gujarat, India, shares a similar approach at The Onion Tree Pizza Co. in New York’s East Village.

“Think about chicken tikka masala and naan—it’s a natural combination,” Jadeja says. “I’m essentially putting one on top of the other instead of serving them separately.” He uses only chicken thighs for the chicken

tikka masala because they are more flavorful and tender than chicken breast. “Instead of the traditional yogurt, I add whipped cream for a fluffier, lighter consistency,” he says. A housemade ginger garlic paste helps bind the toasted seasonings.

### **No Boundaries**

Ultimately, there are no limits. At Reilly Craft Pizza & Drink in Tucson, Arizona, a rotating crew’s whim pizza allows employees to contribute with favorite ingredients from their culinary backgrounds. One recent example featured a mozzarella and fontina pizza with shaved red onion, fennel pollen and Mexican pork chorizo.

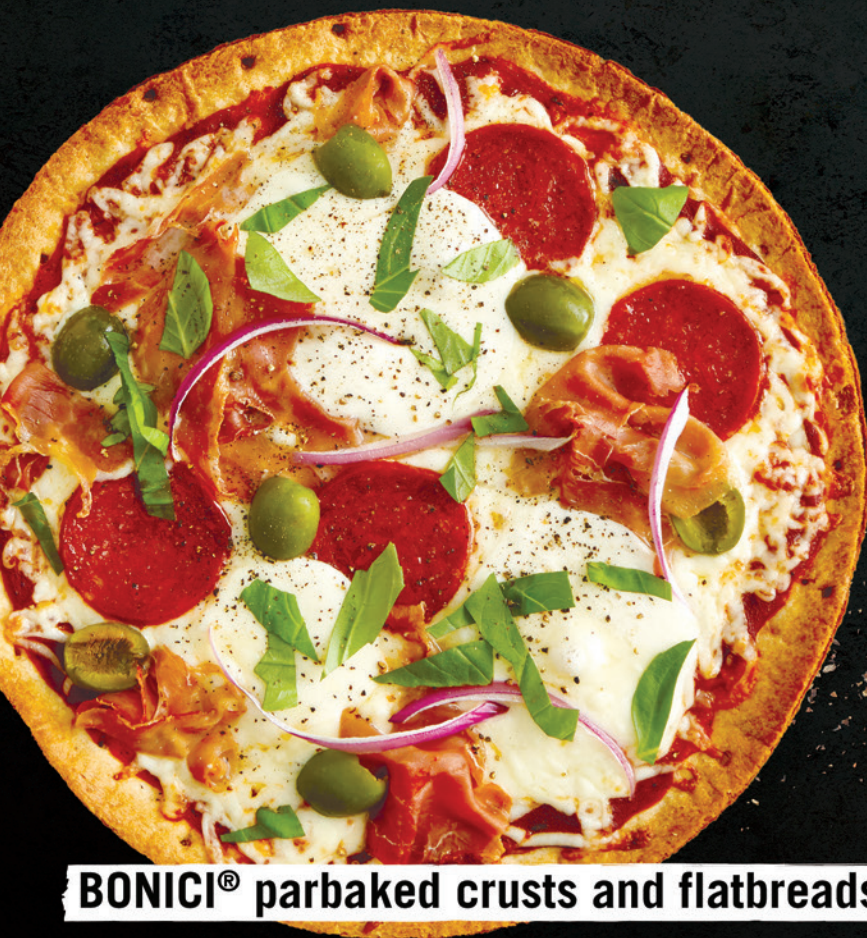
Roots Pizza in Chicago offers more than 80 toppings and housemade dressings for

guests to build their own pizzas. Some of the more internationally inspired toppings include tortilla strips, spicy tofu, kimchi vinaigrette, carrot tahini, curry cauliflower and Tajin-roasted sweet potato. Favorites include taco pizza, a menu staple with taco-seasoned crumbled sausage, housemade mozzarella, lettuce, tomatoes, sour cream and taco chips. There’s also a tikka masala butter chicken pizza and Korean fried chicken pizza. “Pizza is a clever way to introduce international ingredients and flavors into an approachable food that everyone can relate to,” says Scott Weiner, co-owner. “Over the years, working with dozens of guest chefs on collaborations, it’s introduced me to flavor profiles that I had even yet to try.” ■



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By Kristen Hawley

# STRETCHING OUT

How tech is helping independent pizza businesses compete like the big dogs

■ **Lee Kindell** didn't have dreams of going big. Instead, he relished stepping back from his hostel business in 2020 to make artisanal pizza—the kind of handmade delight that he once created and served to his hostel guests.

For a while, his Seattle-based business Moto worked. But an arm injury forced Kindell to cede the kneading to a large electric mixer he purchased secondhand. He says he can taste the difference between the mixer and the preferred hand-kneaded dough for the square pies.

But sales showed no one noticed. At one point, the restaurant had a three-month wait list as Kindell's pizza productivity tapped out at 300 pies per day. But the business was growing, expanding to several locations, including T-Mobile Park, home of the Seattle Mariners.

Kindell remained deeply committed to quality ingredients, but he quickly realized he could use technology to scale his craft. The mixer was just the beginning.

## ● **Demand thrives**

Pizzerias across the country are tapping artificial intelligence and automation to innovate on the speed, efficiency, marketing and labor of making pizza. In fact, the humble pie has enjoyed an outsized amount of attention and innovation from tech-minded types. Recipes have been tweaked and iterated on, production has been roboticized. Pizza was a delivery favorite long before restaurant delivery became a business expected to be worth as much as \$250 billion by 2028. But mostly, pizza is a universally beloved slice of American history. Every day, one in eight consumers eats pizza. Americans are forecast to buy \$50 billion in pizza this year.

Convenience also drives pizza. Domino's launched its famed Pizza Tracker more than a decade ago, and it's still leaning on tech. In an earnings call this spring, Domino's CEO Russell Weiner told investors the chain is

**"Technology is the future, and if you're not jumping on board, you're going to be left behind."**

—Lee Kindell, Moto



**Pizza from Moto that leverages tech.**

using AI to make pizzas before they're even ordered. "You start your order online, and at some point, our algorithm figures out you're ready to order and we start making them." This leads to faster delivery or carryout times, rendering the entire process significantly more efficient.

#### ● **Tech lends the upper hand**

Large corporate entities like Domino's have the capital to implement major technology improvements, giving them an edge over competitors.

But great technology isn't reserved solely for the behemoths, says Tina Glickman, vice president of partnerships for Owner.com.

"For local restaurants, the key to building deeper relationships with customers through off-premise dining starts with owning the ordering channel," she says. "By doing so, you can control your guests' experience and gain valuable insights into who is ordering from you. With solutions like Owner, you can invest in technology to offer the same experience as the national chains. This includes a top-tier direct online ordering platform, which allows operators to fully own their customer data in order to send relevant and targeted personalized communications as well as implement a customer loyalty program."

There's also PizzaBox.ai, a sister service of tech company RestoGPT, which uses generative artificial intelligence to make branded ordering websites, manage incoming orders (including orders from third-party delivery services) and organize deliveries.

Vincent Chaglasyan, chief operating officer at RestoGPT and PizzaBox.ai, likens the tech to a digital restaurant employee who handles online ordering and delivery. To get started, a pizzeria inputs its menu link, and the system creates a direct online ordering storefront for pickup and delivery. To manage the storefront, restaurateurs chat with a bot like they'd talk to a person—for example, asking it to 86 menu items or turn off delivery during certain hours.

It's a high-tech service for a low-tech audience. Independent pizzeria owners don't want or need complicated dashboards full of data to track and settings to tweak.

"Sometimes they want a simple solution that essentially does it for them, in natural language," Chaglasyan says. But the best part, he says, is using tech to bring more equality to a business dominated by large chains. Local and neighborhood restaurants have had the advantage of forming relationships with nearby customers, which national brands couldn't compete with, Chaglasyan says. But with the popularity of off-premise dining, "it's been diluted and, to a certain degree, lost. It's about restoring that and making sure your restaurants aren't falling behind," he says.

#### ● **Scaling the latest height**

Kindell's enthusiastic embrace of technology to support every aspect of the business would take Moto to heights he couldn't imagine, figuratively and literally.

He tapped a local pizza robotics company, Picnic, to use the company's automated "pizza station" to assemble pies. The robot portions ingredients so precisely, it's helped Kindell cut food costs and think differently about the best way to engage his human employees. The automation's success prompted Kindell to sign a deal with a separate robotics company to add bot-made salads to Moto's menus. Even his pizza's shape is different, cut into rectangles about the size of an iPhone for portability. "You look at your phone everywhere. I wanted the pizza to be able to be eaten anywhere also," he says.

He's also reimaged classic pizza delivery. Soon, his pizzas will take flight in some Seattle neighborhoods with Zipline, a flying drone delivery service that can lower a box of pizza so precisely, it can land at the center of a backyard picnic table.

"Technology is the future, and if you're not jumping on board, you're going to be left behind," Kindell says. ■

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# WANT A PIECE OF THE PIE?

Five considerations to earn dough with pizza



By Bret Thorn

■ **Selling pizza** is enticing. Food costs and labor can be low and demand remains high, especially for casual and late-night operations. While more consumers eat pizza in the evening, according to research firm Datassential, the food's numerous styles and seemingly endless combinations can equate to a viable add-on for lunch or all-day concepts.

Pizza's breadth, however, can pose challenges, so it's essential to consider the style that best fits the concept as well as customer preferences.

### 1 **Determine your commitment.**

Industry experts like Technomic frequently refer to the barbell activity among consumers: some splurge for more exotic ingredients and others base choices on value. "Adding pizza to your menu is not as easy as people think, unless you're using a convenience product," says pizza equipment expert Jim Day, founding principal of ASM Culinary Equipment. "If you're looking to commit to pizza, you need to create a thoughtful program if you want to be considered a real player in the space."

Restaurateurs who want to offer late-night, no-frills pizza, but want to take a step up from pre-made frozen pies, might look to local dough vendors for frozen balls and sheets of dough. "There are also some decent par-baked shells and even sauced pizzas that are available," Day says.

### 2 **Consider the pie of least resistance.**

If you want to make your own pizza with limited equipment outlay, Detroit-style might be the way to go, says Michael Harlan Turkell, host of the Modernist Pizza Podcast. "The biggest questions are temperature and ventilation," he says.

Detroit-style pizza, which has gained popularity during the past decade, begins with a thick but light and airy crust similar to focaccia. The dough is more forgiving and can be formed to fit a sheet pan, which eliminates the stretching skill traditional pies require. After a layer of cheese from edge to edge,



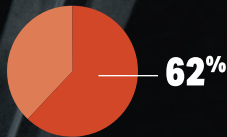
# 90%

Consumers who plan to eat more or the same amount of pizza in the upcoming year

Source: Datassential



## FORECAST FOR PIZZA PROFITS LOOKS HOT



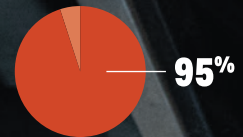
Pizza orders in limited-service restaurants ending in the first quarter of 2024, reflect an increase of 0.9%, which is significant when restaurant traffic is flat

Source: Technomic

# 74,000

Businesses that sell pizza in the United States, an increase of nearly 1% since 2019

Source: IBIS World



Operators who expect pizza sales to stay the same or increase in the upcoming year

Source: Datassential

chunky tomatoes and toppings follow. Because this type of dough requires a lower and slower bake—400 F to 500 F—there’s no need to spend on special equipment. Other pizzas are cooked at high temperatures—900 F and up for traditional Neapolitan pizza, closer to 700 F for other artisanal pies or 550 F to 600 F for New York-style.

### 3 Weigh the style’s benefits and drawbacks.

Although Detroit-style pizza is on trend and can usually be made with existing equipment, the dough needs a lot of love: a high hydration level of at least 65% and fermentation for 48 to 72 hours for a light, crispy texture, typically.

For that you need time, patience and cooler space, says Graham Day, Jim Day’s son and president of ASM. “If you already have a jam-packed walk-in and you’re looking to add a fresh dough program, where are you going to

keep it?” It’s a consideration operators often overlook, but frozen dough can help solve that issue. Pizza cooked in sheet pans, whether it’s bar pie, tavern-style as in Chicago, grandma or Sicilian in New York City, or al taglio in Rome, is also a viable option that cooks at 475 F to 500 F. New York-style pizza can also be cooked at that temperature, but it benefits from a minor investment in pizza steels or stones.

### 4 Cater to your people.

Regardless of the style of pie, allowing diners to customize their pies should be a consideration; research shows that 53% of customers assemble pie at home vs. dining out because they can choose their toppings, according to Datassential. That said, “Pizzas featuring stuffed crust as well as takes on global and regional varieties hold the most consumer appeal, outranking pies positioned as better-for-you or agreeable

to certain diets or with more plant-forward toppings,” says the Datassential report. The firm’s research also shows that people choose a restaurant because, to them, it has the best-tasting pizza. Value for the money is the secondary motivator.

### 5 Go small instead of large.

The grand brick ovens of top pizzerias might be nice to marvel at but unrealistic for established operations. For usually less than \$10,000, speed-cook ovens like the ones at quick-service coffee concepts that produce toasty sandwiches could be an option. These plug-and-play ovens don’t require hoods. “When people would like to have a limited offering but want a dedicated oven so they don’t have to compete with the current space in their ovens, something like that can get you into pizza without a large investment or space requirement,” Jim Day says. ■



The simplicity of the Tie-dye pie at Rubirosa in New York (signature tomato and vodka sauce with mozzarella and basil puree) makes it a longtime bestseller.





# **Shape Shifters**

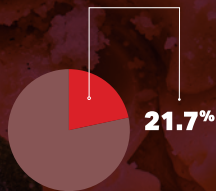
**Filled pasta tells a story that  
can bring back customers**



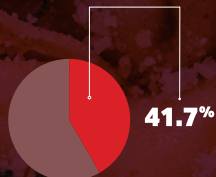
Housemade pasta filled with taleggio cheese is a simple expression of the regional Italian menu at Saint Bibiana. Turn the page for the recipe.



By Bret Thorn  
Photography by Matt Armendariz  
Food styling by Adam Pearson  
Prop styling by Amy Paliwoda



Restaurants that offer stuffed pasta, up by 1.8% during the past five years



Fine dining restaurants that offer stuffed pasta, up from 40.2% in 2019

Source: Technomic

**Call** it raviolo, tortellini, agnolotti or any of the innumerable names for stuffed pasta. No matter the name, diners love the indulgence of a starch filled with rich and creamy ingredients.

According to restaurant research firm Technomic, 21.7% of restaurants offer stuffed pasta, up by 1.8% during the past five years. That figure is even higher in fine dining restaurants, of which 41.7% have stuffed pasta, up from 40.2% in 2019. While consumers have a love-hate relationship with carbs, statistics show that growth looks promising. Datassential, also a food research firm, projects a 46% increase in stuffed pasta during the next three years.

The growth jives with the uptick of pasta programs at casual and upscale restaurants that offer thinly rolled stuffed dough as a way to showcase vegetables, a location or an Italian region along with indigenous ingredients. Basically, it's a vehicle to tell a story.

### Make it personal

Chef/owner Miguel Trinidad's chopped cheese raviolo at Marie's in Brooklyn, New York, is an homage to his Italian wife's family, while the stuffing of ground beef, cheese and sazon speaks of his Dominican heritage. "I also draw from the flavors of the neighborhood and of New York City." (See story on page 4.)

### Create a sense of place

Rocio Neyra Palmer, the chef de cuisine at Summit, the restaurant at The Broadmoor hotel in Colorado Springs, Colorado, looks at pasta similarly.

"Colorado has some nice varieties of eggplant that fit more with what we do at Summit, which is making good food with seasonal, local ingredients and having fun with techniques," she says, explaining why she uses the vegetable to create fiore di carciofi, a shape that resembles artichoke flowers.

Rosa Bianca eggplant is roasted with garlic, pureed, mixed with goat cheese and piped onto

## Taleggio Stuffed Mezzaluna with Chantrelles

Director of Culinary Derek Simcik  
Saint Bibiana at Hotel Bardo, Savannah, Georgia

- 2 cups 00 flour
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 300 grams egg yolks
- 1½ teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 block taleggio, rind removed, room temperature
- ¾ cup heavy cream
- Olive oil, as needed
- 1 teaspoon shallot, minced
- 1 teaspoon garlic, minced
- ½ cup chanterelles or other meaty mushroom, cleaned and sliced
- Splash white wine
- Kosher salt, as needed
- 2 teaspoons thyme, minced
- Sherry vinegar, to taste
- 3 small cubes butter
- 1 tablespoon parsley, minced
- Parmigiano-Reggiano for finishing
- Arugula or cress for garnishing

**Combine** flour and salt in a mixer with dough hook. Combine yolks and oil and add to dry ingredients. Mix until dough comes together and knead until smooth. Wrap in plastic and rest refrigerated for at least 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, whip cheese and heavy cream until smooth and creamy and place in piping bag.

**Pass** dough through pasta roller and cut out circles. Fill half of circle with cheese filling and fold dough, using a fork to seal fully around the edges to a half-moon shape. For each serving, cook 7 mezzalunas in boiling salted water until they float.

In a hot pan coated with olive oil, saute shallots and garlic along with the mushrooms. When aromatic, add white wine and reduce by half. Add thyme, sherry vinegar and a 4-ounce ladle of pasta water. Reduce by half and add pasta to the pan with the sauce. Add a few cubes of butter and emulsify, adjust seasoning with salt and pepper. Toss in parsley and plate. Spoon sauce over pasta and garnish cheese and a few sprigs of red cress or arugula.

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**Filled pasta like Agnolotti Pesto Trapanese sells, which aligns with a projected 46% increase in stuffed pasta during the next three years.**

thin sheets of pasta, which she then folds over, seals and rolls into spirals. The pasta is boiled quickly and served with a garlic cream sauce and Vidalia onion soubise.

### **Give it a twist**

Local and seasonal mushrooms are at the core of the large half-moon-shaped pasta at Saint Bibiana, a restaurant named for the patron saint of hangovers, in Savannah, Georgia.

Derek Simcik, Saint Bibiana's director of culinary, focuses on coastal Southern Italian food—Rome down to Naples and Sicily and around the heel of the Italian boot to Puglia —“with a little bit of influence from the (U.S.) South, mainly with the ingredients,” he says. That approach is the basis for mezzaluna. “It’s like a reverse mac ‘n’ cheese.”

The filling for the half-moon shapes features taleggio cheese whipped with heavy cream, which results in a light and airy but rich mouthfeel. The rest of the dish highlights whatever mushrooms are in season—morels in early spring and chanterelles later— in a simple wine reduction sauce with herbs.

“The herbs and a little acid, plus the earthiness of the mushrooms, play really nicely with that cheese,” he says.

### **Evoke playfulness**

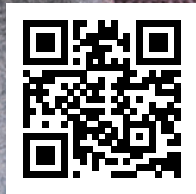
At Casadonna, a Tao Group Hospitality restaurant in Miami, pasta shaped like wrapped candy (think caramels or saltwater taffy) conveys a sense of whimsy. In one rendition, Corporate Executive Chef Hugo Bolanos, who developed the recipe, sautes

seasonal corn (grated raw) into a paste and combines it with whipped ricotta, grated Parmigiano-Reggiano and an egg white to help bind the ingredients. The mixture is dolloped onto fresh pasta sheets, cut, sealed and twisted at the edges to resemble candy wrappers.

### **Twist tradition**

Not all chefs focus on local ingredients for stuffed pasta. At Delmare, a seafood restaurant at the Eclipse at Half Moon in Montego Bay, Jamaica, Chef Claudio Facchinetti reaches for a traditional filling from Italy's Southern region for agnolotti, a Northern Italian pasta shape.

“The pesto Trapanese is typical of Trapani, a city in Sicily,” Facchinetti says of Sicilian pesto's blend of roasted almonds, caciocavallo cheese, tomatoes, garlic and basil. ■



Instead of cutting agnolotti, Chef de Cuisine Rocio Neyra Palmer at Summit at The Broadmoor swirls strips of the filled dough for a different presentation. Scan the code for the recipe.

# PRONTO PASTAI!

**GET UP TO  
SPEED ON  
THIS FAST  
CASUAL'S  
MONEY-  
MAKING  
POTENTIAL**

By Laura Yee  
Photography by Matt Armendariz  
Food styling by Adam Pearson  
Prop styling by Amy Paliwoda





Ready-to-toss ingredients, such as vodka sauce, pomodoro, alfredo and pesto, are hallmarks of fast casual pasta concepts.





**It just takes one main portable dish to become a hit, like gnocchi with vodka sauce and burrata from Gnocchi on 9th in New York.**

## Pasta on the fly is making a comeback,

tackling challenges that once dogged the concept while satisfying an ever-increasing wallet-watching audience.

Menus are on trend and more focused. Technology has accelerated the preparation of dried pasta while the once costlier fresh variety, which naturally cooks faster, is no longer an issue when it's made on site. Equally, if not more importantly, today's fast casual pasta is more portable and less messy than its yesteryear equivalent.

Independent operators behind fast casual concepts are popping up in urban centers and suburban communities across the country.

There's no cookie-cutter approach, but they all share certain elements: fast casual pasta concepts provide value and quality, and they're savvy about the public's perception of healthy eating. Diners want better-for-you options, but they also want to indulge, which often means pasta, especially when its enrobed in a rich and creamy cheese sauce. Spaces tend to be compact and for the most part, there are no servers. They're more like bussers, dropping off orders and clearing tables. Automation and technology typically have roles to play.

Here's a rundown of independent fast casual pasta concepts gaining traction and what's propelling them forward as diners queue up for carbs much like burritos at Chipotle and salads at Sweetgreen.

### PASTA SUPPLY CO

*San Francisco*

**Why it stands out:** The small lunch and dinner menu rotates regularly, offering extensive varieties of housemade pasta, including filled shapes, such as oval-shaped cuscini, spring pea mezzaluna and chicken porcini raviolini. The menu has a fine dining vibe with more creative options such as ricotta cannelloni with zucchini and squash blossom sugo, but the price point is higher (low \$20s) for some items. This approach can be attractive to diners who want elevated food but are refraining from pasta dishes hitting closer to the \$30 mark. Packaged pasta and packaged sauces are available for purchase in addition to dining in and takeout. A second neighborhood location opened earlier this year. Pasta-making classes are also offered.

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**Creamy and cheesy options are often bestsellers at fast casual pasta concepts.**

## TRAITS OF FAST CASUAL PASTA

- Quick and affordable
- Portable to encourage delivery or consumption on the spot
- Served in packaging to reduce labor
- A la carte method that starts at a base price, with customizable add-ons
- No traditional servers, order at the counter
- Cheesy sauces tend to be the biggest sellers
- Classic shapes and traditional sauces are the most common, but some feature in-house pasta programs with more innovative sauces and toppings.

### BE PASTA

*Brookline, Mass.*

**Why it stands out:** Build your own pasta is served in a branded cylinder-shaped to-go container. Customers choose options starting at \$11, including a fresh pasta shape, sauce and toppings, which are heated in a saute pan to order. Toppings, such as chicken cutlet, meatballs, eggplant, sausage and more, are \$3. Premade salads and sandwiches as well as bottled drinks are available. Located along a mass transit line near universities, the spot attracts students and families.

### PASTA FASTA

*Chicago*

**Why it stands out:** Starting at \$7.90, pasta (four shapes including a gluten-free option for a \$2.50 upcharge) is topped with a sauce and then swirled in a small, medium or large cylinder to-go container,

which eliminates any vessels to wash. Upcharges are attached to certain toppings, like \$3 for chicken and \$1.50 for cherry tomatoes. Likewise for sauces, such as \$1.50 more for beef and mushroom. Of the nine sauce options, quattro formaggio is the most popular. Cold pasta is also available from the concept that originated from Kosovo in 2018. Chicago is the first U.S. location with the goal to expand.

### FORMA PASTA FACTORY

*Brooklyn, New York*

**Why it stands out:** Pasta made daily on premise starting at \$14 reflects regional Italian combinations. Dishes include fettucine with sauteed wild mushrooms, rosemary and thyme cream sauce and Parmigiano-Reggiano and malfidini with sauteed shrimp in white wine and butter sauce, chili flakes and garlic breadcrumbs. Daily specials like lamb sausage ragu with sun-dried tomatoes, broccolini and Pecorino Romano are \$17. Salads, sides and desserts are offered. Extensive takeout and delivery presence.

### GNOCCHI ON 9TH

*East Village, New York City*

**Why it stands out:** The single-focus menu of gnocchi two ways (pomodoro or vodka sauce) is served in a Chinese-style paper pail takeout box for \$12 to \$15. There is an option to add burrata drizzled with extra-virgin olive oil for an additional \$3. Caesar salad and tiramisu are also available. Like many shoe box-sized storefronts with no dine-in, the concept benefited from social media.

### SAUCI PASTA

*St. Charles, Missouri*

**Why it stands out:** Build-your-own pasta starts at \$10 from the owners of beloved Fratelli's, a longstanding family-style Italian restaurant. Customers pick a pasta and a sauce (six types of each) with the option to add a protein, such as shrimp for \$6, and additional toppings for \$1.50 each, including broccoli and toasted breadcrumbs. Options are made to order, allowing pasta and sauces tossed in a saute pan to absorb flavors. Located in a suburban shopping center, Sauci operated for limited hours for more than a month due to high demand. ■



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARC FIORITO

# ANY WAY YOU SLICE IT

Pizza king  
Tony Gemignani  
on embracing  
all styles

By Lisa Shames

■ **As** multihyphenates go, Tony Gemignani is the real deal. Chef, restaurant owner, author, world-champion competitor, school founder, TV commentator and multiple Guinness Book of World Records holder are all titles Gemignani can proudly claim. Wide-ranging as those may be, there's one thing that ties them all together: pizza.

Gemignani, who grew up on a cherry and apricot orchard in Fremont, California, is more than a good competitor. He also has multiple restaurant concepts across the country, including his first, Tony's Pizza Napoletana in San Francisco, which features four styles of pizzas and seven regionally specific ovens, and Slice House, which has close to 150 franchises in development.

"I started making pizza when I was 18 years old, and I fell in love with it instantly," says Gemignani, who got his start at his brother's pizzeria. Some 33 years later, his pizza passion shows no signs of slowing down.

**Q. What criteria make for a great pizza?**

**A.** Back in the day, I traveled around the world—from Detroit to Florida to Fargo to Italy. Tossing pizzas and doing events, I was able to experience a true, authentic style of pizza

in its hometown. For me, what makes a great pizza—and really great food in general—is always about balance. Each bite should take you on a journey. I have traditional pizzas on my menu, and I have chef-driven out-of-the-box pizzas. It's important to have a little bit of both depending on where you are.

I celebrate every style of pizza. Before, pizza was very territorial. You had New York, Neapolitan, Roman and Chicago styles of pizza, and nobody liked each other. I opened Tony's with multiple ovens and multiple styles. It was one of the first of its kind that celebrated almost every style of pizza. Now you see three or four styles out of one pizzeria. I always say I look at pizza very much like pasta. I can't say I love spaghetti and hate manicotti. If it's made right, it's a beautiful thing.

**Q. What have been some of your defining career moments?**

**A.** Being 23 on "The Tonight Show" was a big deal. Back then, when you got on "The Tonight Show," you had made it. When I won the World Pizza Cup in Naples in 2007 for Best Margherita, it was the first time that anyone won in cooking from the U.S., let alone anybody outside of Naples. It was kind of a big moment in the pizza industry that recognized that the U.S. does in fact have good pizza.

**Q. What have been some of your biggest challenges?**

**A.** When you're young and you want to open a concept, the biggest questions are about the business side of things. Where do I find the funding? How do I create a business plan? What's a buy-sell agreement? What's a partnership agreement? Most of us in the restaurant industry back then didn't go to college and didn't understand business. But eventually you find some money, you open a restaurant, and hopefully you make it. You're always trying to improve your food, but the business side of it is just as important. It's not the sexiest of the stuff, but it's just as vital.

**Q. How have you been able to grow and maintain so many pizza and restaurant concepts?**

**A.** Diversity of the menu, understanding your demographic and building your team are all really important. Every teammate is different, so understanding that is important. I have different restaurants and different employees, and you need to understand that talking to a 17-year-old is different than talking to a 45-year-old.

**Q. What have been some of the biggest lessons you've learned?**

**A.** Learning the business side of it was really valuable. We tend not to look at that, especially new operators. Understanding that when you build a restaurant and you think the capital has been raised, it's a rarity that you see a restaurant be under budget. It's usually over budget and delayed. A rule of thumb: Don't pay rent until you open if you can do that.

**Q. How has the pizza industry changed since you first became a part of it?**

**A.** Bakers and chefs have now gone into the industry. A lot of the big chefs would never touch pizza. It's street food and for delivery. What happened during COVID was everybody had to deliver as we were forced to. Some restaurants didn't rebound, so they swallowed their pride and now are learning the pizza trade and opening pizza restaurants because it's less risky. The entire pizza industry has been elevated. Social media has helped in that it's expanded people's ideas of pizza. The pizza industry has grown, and it's exciting to see. Robotics has touched our industry a little bit and will be interesting to see where it's at in 10 or 20 years. But there's nothing like being able to have a personal connection with the chef making your pizza. ■



## TONY GEMIGNANI

- Won World Champion Pizza Maker at the World Pizza Cup in Naples, Italy, 13 times
- Opened Tony's Pizza Napoletana in San Francisco and a year later added Tony's Coal-Fired Pizza & Slice House next door
- Opened Pizza Rock in Sacramento, a concept that pairs gourmet pizzas with specialty cocktails
- Started Capo's, a Chicago-style Italian pizzeria and whiskey bar at San Francisco's North Beach
- Released his first cookbook, "PIZZA," followed by "Tony and the Pizza Champions," a children's book, and "The Pizza Bible"
- Inducted into the Guinness Book of World Records for creating the largest pizza as well as the most consecutive rolls across the shoulders (a pizza-throwing technique).



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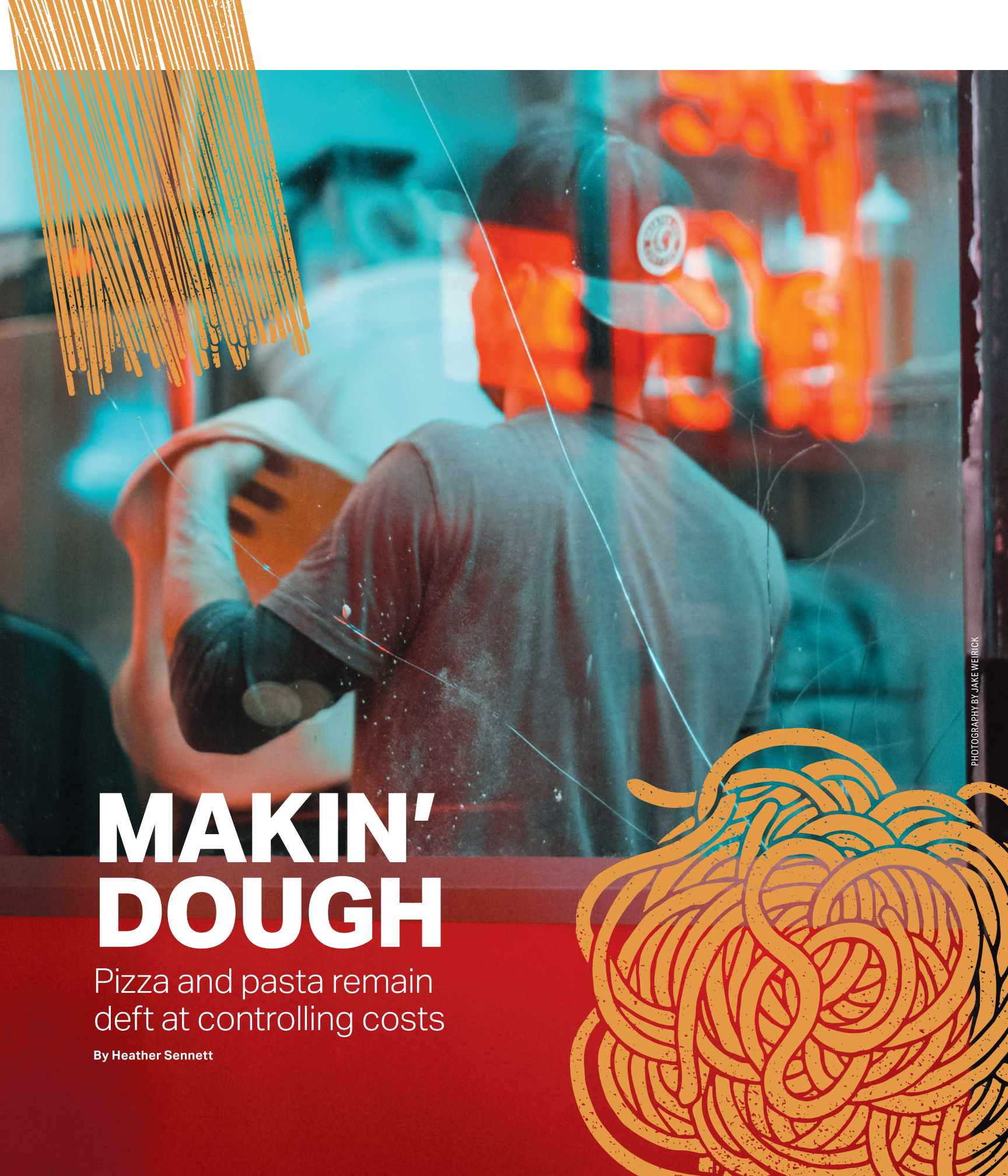
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PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAKE WEIRICK

# MAKIN' DOUGH

Pizza and pasta remain deft at controlling costs

By Heather Sennett



## No food has escaped higher prices in recent years—

even the humblest ingredients central to Italian cuisine, such as flour, tomatoes and cheese. But that doesn't mean menu stalwarts like pizza and pasta have lost their margin-boosting charms. It just means outsmarting economic factors while reining in costs to prop up profitability.

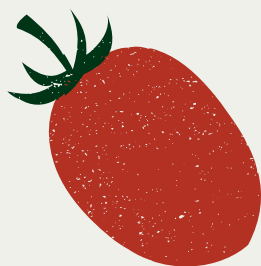
Here's a refresher—a playbook of tips from chefs who pay as much attention to what's coming off the line as they do watching the bottom line.

### TRY CROSS-UTILIZATION

Find an ingredient you love at a good price, and use it across the menu. For Chris Thompson, executive chef/owner of The National Telluride in Telluride, Colorado, that includes a "relatively expensive" feta that appears in a watermelon salad, a lamb shawarma Bolognese, a spiedini and more. Leftover whey finds a home in whipped feta, with larger crumbles of the cheese starring in salads and smaller pieces appearing in sauces and garnishes.

### AIM FOR (ALMOST) ZERO WASTE

Italian chefs are masters at using every bit of each ingredient, keeping waste to a bare minimum. "Italian cuisine in general is a cuisine that was developed out of necessity, not out of luxury," Thompson says. Carrot tops can become garnish or salad additions, and celery leaves also can brighten a plate. "One of my successes in a day is when our recycling is full and our trash is pretty scant," he says. His kitchen also does lots of pickling to preserve local produce.



### IF YOU SERVE IT, CHARGE FOR IT

And that means items like bread. Brian Cripps, executive chef of Milwaukee's Tre Rivali, started charging for housemade bread earlier this year. Customers now choose to pay \$5 for a large square of focaccia and some sauce, a product that had been delivered to each table with the cost rolled in. Cripps says there hasn't been any pushback from diners. "That's something we had to adjust to as well—with rising food costs, we pay for this stuff," he says. "So, rather than factoring the cost of bread into our dishes on the menu, we charge for it up front."

### KNOW YOUR MARKET

In the resort community of Telluride, diners will bear more price increases than they would in Milwaukee, Thompson and Cripps say. "You definitely have a ceiling on it," Cripps notes. "I try to describe restaurants this way: We're a want, not a need."

### EMPLOY TECH TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

Thompson has found success using an inventory-management system powered by artificial intelligence. "I have a pretty good

grasp of what I pay for things, but when you're talking over 400 to 600 different items in a week, a 25% price increase can slip past you," he says.

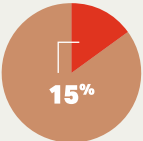
### BALANCE LABOR WITH OUTSOURCING

Depending on your operation, it may make sense to outsource some items, rather than making them in-house. A big kitchen could churn out fresh pasta, while a smaller staff might buckle under the responsibility. And, if a dish isn't consistent, you won't win repeat business, says Ryan Connors, executive chef at Capriccio in Providence, Rhode Island. "It all comes down to the people," Connors says. "I can teach anybody to make pasta. I can't teach them to be fast at it." But Cripps, who has 27 to 30 cooks on at all times, finds his restaurant saves money making pasta in-house because the kitchen can produce so much of it. Plus, pasta shapes can be created with certain sauces in mind, limiting the amount of sauce per plate because the noodles grab onto it so well, he says.

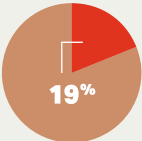


PHOTOGRAPH BY MATT ARMENDARIZ. FOOD STYLING BY ADAM PEARSON. PROP STYLING BY AMY PALIWODA

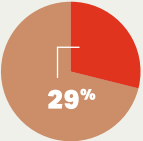
**WHAT MAKES FOR EXCEPTIONAL PIE**  
(According to consumers)



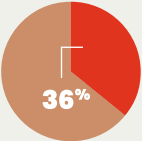
**Cheese**



**Sauce**



**Crust**



**Toppings**

Source: Datassential

**PORTION SMARTLY**

"Flour and eggs are like the stock market right now," says Connors. It's more important than ever to settle on portion sizes that work for your bottom line, starting with proper training of cooks and oversight of the line to ensure consistency. But Cripps also likes to test dishes with the whole staff, making sure they know the menu price for each dish. "They'll be the ones who are brutally honest with you, saying, 'You can't charge that,'" he says. "Anybody who is in a position of leadership should listen."

**HAVE SOME WORKHORSE DISHES**

On a menu with six pastas at The National Telluride, two are vegetarian, two are meat, and two are seafood, Thompson says. And the higher-margin vegetarian options sell well, he says. "I try to make vegetarian pastas for people that consider themselves carnivores. They don't know that there's meat missing from the dish." Making use of whole-ingredient dishes like meatballs and ragu can balance out more expensive plates, Cripps says. "You get a ton of yield out of it, and it's all ground meat." ■



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BY THE NUMBERS

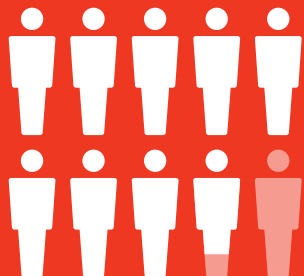
# THE EARLS OF SANDWICHES

No matter the cuisine or concept, the combinations of bread and ingredients sandwiched in between know no bounds. The numbers underscore their potential for profitability.



# 88%

Consumers who say they're eating more than or the same number of sandwiches as last year



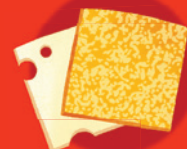
## WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT



Protein  
**27%**



Bread  
**13%**



Cheese  
**7%**



All equally important  
**41%**



Toppings  
**7%**



Condiments/sauces  
**5%**

ILLUSTRATION BY DREW BARDANA

Source: Datassential

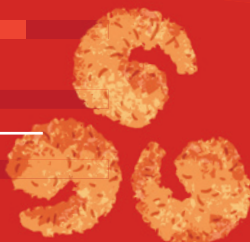
## FASTEST GROWING

### PROTEIN

Plant-based egg **+783%**

Breaded shrimp **+108%**

Wagyu **+96%**



### BREAD

Corn tortilla **+783%**

Egg bread **+78%**

Gluten-free bun **+65%**



### CHEESE

Vegan **+140%**

Parmigiano **+125%**

Plant-based **+90%**



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# GOODNESS TO GO

