

Convenience and Versatility Power Pizza

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More Americans than ever are eating pizza, according to data from consumer research firm Technomic. A full 41% of respondents to a Technomic survey said that they now eat pizza at least once a week, up from 26% two years ago.

Howard Riell, Associate Editor.



Americans continue to choose pizza at an impressive rate. According to Chicago-based research and consulting firm Technomic Inc., 41% of consumers polled said that they are now eating pizza once a week, compared to 26% only two years ago.

Consumers who are feeling the financial pinch are attracted to the special offers and coupons, said Technomic Executive Vice President Darren Tristano. Combo-meat varieties and calzone-style stuffed pizzas stand out as growth areas, as do veggie/garden and combo-meat pizzas.

Expanding the Menu

Specialty offerings, such as the Philly cheesesteak pizza, have proven extremely popular in helping battle menu fatigue and jumpstarting sales during peak periods, maximizing sales. The limited-run generally lasts for up to three months. The addition of chicken wings to the mix only heightens the consumer response.

Arlene Spiegel, a veteran foodservice consultant and president of Arlene Spiegel & Associates, breaks down the pluses and minuses of turn-key pizza operations in general this way: Turn-key programs are good for inexperienced operators because systems and protocols are set, the supplier network is in place and successful locations can be modeled.

Among the negatives, Spiegel said, is relatively little ability to customize the products or the experience, and that could be somewhat limiting for more experienced operators or in markets where customers crave variety.

Pizza Expectations

Consumers increasingly view pizza as the 'go-to' food when they don't feel like cooking. "Operators can emphasize convenience in their marketing message, positioning pizza as an easy, convenient and affordable meal solution that will appeal to an entire group or family. It's a message that resonates with many customers," Tristano said.

As such, pizza is as popular as ever. "It's very affordable and convenient for the consumer, it's one of the few foods that kids and adults love equally, and it's available in all kinds of varieties—from the high-dollar Neapolitan style pizzas to mobile units with pizza ovens in their trailers to take-and-bake to plain cheese slices for a buck or a buck-fifty a slice," said Hynum.

Fun Facts About Pizza

According to pizza.com, there are approximately 61,269 pizzerias in the U.S. All told, about three billion pizzas are sold annually in the U.S. Other facts about pizza sales include:

- The average pizzeria uses roughly 55 pizza boxes per day.
- Americans consume around 251.7 million pounds of pepperoni on pizza every year.
- 94% of Americans eat pizza regularly and 93% have eaten pizza in the last month.
- Kids ages 3-11 prefer pizza over all other food groups for lunch and dinner.
- The top five pizza sales days are Super Bowl Sunday, New Year's Eve, Halloween, the night before Thanksgiving and New Year's Day.
- Domino's delivery drivers alone log about four million miles on Super Bowl Sunday.