

AMORE PIZZERIA & ITALIAN KITCHEN

THE HISTORY OF PIZZA & MARGHERITA PIZZA

With a one thousand-year history and a world-renowned tradition, pizza is one of the most important symbols of Italy. And it has a fairy tale origin story with roots in the distant past.

Once humans discovered how to cook using a stone, the step to pizza was a short one. Yes, the origins of this food, which has become the trademark of Italian cuisine (Neapolitan in particular), goes all the way back to prehistory, with some believing it all began during the Neolithic Period.

Did pizza originate in the East?

In the Near East, when agriculture was still new, humans figured out that cooking a wet dough of roasted and ground cereals or unleavened bread on a stone was a good way to get something tasty and original to eat. But it was thanks to the ancient Egyptians, the discoverers of yeast, that the history of what we now know as pizza began. After leavening, the dough made of cracked or milled cereals becomes softer, lighter, tastier and easier to digest after cooking. That was how bread first came into being.

Roman Pizza

Once bread was invented, the development of pizza continued in ancient Rome. Here, peasants learned to cross the various types of known farro to create flour (its Italian name *farina* derives from “far,” which in Latin means faro.) They kneaded the milled wheat flour with water, aromatic herbs and salt. Then they put this round loaf to cook on the hearth, in the hot ashes. The Neapolitans are probably not going to take this very well, but it was the Romans who actually started to use discs of bread to hold saucy dishes—creating round pizzas, more or less, but still distant relatives of the pizzas you can enjoy today under the shadow of Vesuvius. In fact, many ingredients were still missing, some of which remained unknown until centuries later.

We're almost there...

The term “pizza” in the first historical documents

From bite to mouthful, from piece of bread to focaccia, everything evolves. In the 7th century AD, with the arrival of the Lombards in Italy, a new Gothic-Lombard word began to circulate: *bizzo*, sometimes *pizzo*, or *bizzen* in German, meaning, “bite.” But it was not until around the year 1000 AD that the first official documents with the term “pizza” began to appear. Like one dated 1195 and drawn up in Penne, in the Abruzzo region, or those of the Roman Curia in 1300, where the terms *pizis* and *pissas* refer to certain typical baked products that were made in that period in the south-center of the peninsula, particularly in the Abruzzo and Molise regions. Getting closer and closer to Naples...

Naples enters the picture - Finally, in 1535, in his “Description of Ancient Places of Naples,” the poet and writer Benedetto di Falco wrote that “focaccia in Neapolitan is called pizza.” And so it became official. Since then, in the Campania region, the evolution of pizza and its tradition has never stopped. Take, for example, the typical wheat flour flatbread kneaded and seasoned with garlic, lard and coarse salt which continues to be extremely popular with the people of the South. Soon, however, olive oil replaced lard, cheese was added and herbs were resurrected from the Roman tradition. And, at the dawn of the 17th century, a recipe with the majestic scent of basil made its appearance, the *pizza a la Mastunicola* (Maestro Nicola, in dialect).

Then came the tomato - In 1600 we get to the real beginning of modern pizza. Bread dough baked in wood-fired ovens, seasoned with garlic, lard and coarse salt—or, in the “richer” version, with *caciocavallo* cheese and basil. With the discovery of the Americas, the tomato arrived in Italy and everything took on a different flavor. The tomato was first used in cooking sauces simmered with a little salt and basil; then later, someone had the idea to use it in a different way, inventing, unbeknownst to them, the pizza as we know it today. But still no mozzarella which only enters the story after 1800, when pizza was very popular with the lower classes. But it was too good to stay only with them: Barons, princes and rulers soon savored it with pleasure, so much so that it made its appearance on the table during the receptions of the Bourbons, while Ferdinand IV had it cooked in the ovens of Capodimonte.

Margherita (D.O.C.) *this traditional pizza dates way back to around 1889, when the Count (Head) of the region in Napoli commissioned a local baker from the Port'Alba; fornaio ~ Raffaele Esposito to create something unique for the visiting King Umberto and his Queen Regina Margherita di Savoia, then sovereigns of Italy. Upon her arrival and as the Queen walked through the old city of Naples - Signor Esposito created specialty baked flat bread (commonly eaten by the city's peasants) in a community hearth wood burning oven at over 800 degrees. This simple, tasty bread impressed the Queen to no end; it was topped with fresh mozzarella and basic local tomato and fresh indigenous local basilico. Not only was this a work of art back at the time, but this resembled the tri colors of the Italian flag. The queen appreciated the pizza so much that she wanted to thank and praise its creator in writing. And the only way for the pizza-maker reciprocated the gesture was to give the name of the queen to his new culinary creation: "Pizza Margherita". The resulting creation was dubbed the "Margherita" for her majesty. In modern times this popular pizza is world renowned, often replicated in many forms, but rarely duplicated within the proper, rigid guidelines of VPN. Yes... there is a specific way to make this pizza.*

Pizza is a simple food in that it has no mystical or religious meaning, as do many other Italian foods. It does not represent money, power, or fertility. It is the ultimate, healthiest fast food, ancient for sure but with strong appeal to modern times. It has grown in popularity outside Naples and Italy for these reasons and because anyone can add anything to it once the dough is made. No other food is so egalitarian.

Today in 2023, Amore Pizzeria & Italian Kitchen follows these rules with incredible reverence & loyalty, including the use of only traditional ingredients: fresh hand-made all natural fior di latte mozzarella {and or bufala mozzarella}, high quality sea salt from Italian coast, fresh torn garden basil, ripe- peeled or hand crushed true San Marzano tomato, 00 Italian premium flour, cold / first-pressed extra virgin high quality olive oil and natural yeast. Only fresh, all natural, non-processed ingredients – made with love >>> brick oven fired..... simple, classic & delicious!

D.O.C. *Denominazione di Origine Controllata (denomization of controlled origin) was created by the Italian government to establish and ensure quality of certain Italian products. It was already in place to safe guard and over see wines {Chianti} and specific Italian cheese production, which are of regional origin. The D.O.C. was a vehicle helping to create guidelines for the "Vera Pizza Napolitana"*



The pizza seller, 1825, by Gaetano Dura (1805-1878), lithograph. Italy, 19th century

The Verace Pizza Napoletana Association (VPN) is an international trade association, founded in 1984 in Naples, Italy by Antonio Pace. Its purpose is to promote the culinary strict tradition of the Neapolitan pizza standards. From our end, we @ Amore ~ Pomodoro diligently work within the frame work of VPN and seriously comply with the ideology of this association. Through proper training & methods in the production of Neapolitan pizza tradition, wherein - no rolling pins, hand stretched dough only, Italian flour and the pies must meet the size & thickness requirements. Very few pizzeria/restaurants produce a truly authentic Neapolitan Pizza and respect the artistry, heritage, and craft.

PIZZA FACTS:

- October's national pizza month
- Italy's greatest contribution to American cuisine is pizza.
- Americans eat about 350 slices per second
- 93 percent of Americans eat at least a pizza a month.
- It's the most popular ethnic food in the country.
- A 30 - billion dollar industry.