



Americans eat approximately 100 acres of pizza each day, which translates into 350 slices per second! But just how did this basic three-ingredient food become so popular? Pizza can be traced back to prehistoric times, when it was simply a bread cooked on hot, flat stones. The word “pizza” is derived from the Latin word *pinsa*, meaning “flatbread.” The Greeks cooked

their pizzas over hot stones, adding herbs for seasoning. Early pizza spread across Rome, Egypt, and Babylon, but it wasn’t until the Middle Ages, however, that it became more common.

Similar to focaccia, pizza was nothing more than dough, olive oil, and fresh herbs until the introduction of the Indian water buffalo, which brought mozzarella cheese to the recipe. Pizza was basically a peasant food designed to be eaten without utensils. Peasants would



top their pizza with whatever fresh produce was available. However, one more ingredient was still to be discovered before pizza would be famous.

In 1830, pizza made its debut with the opening of the world’s first pizzeria, Port Alba. The pizzas were cooked in an oven lined with lava from Mount Vesuvius, a volcano located on the Bay of Naples.

Soon, Naples became famous for pizza, where vendors sold it on the streets for every meal. Pizza shops emerged, and custom-made creations became popular. In 1889, Queen Margherita visited the Pizzeria Brandi in Naples, where Rafaele Esposito created a custom-made pizza for her that contained the three colors of the Italian flag—tomatoes, mozzarella, and basil. Pizza Margherita was a hit with the queen and, to no surprise, the rest of Italy.





## Pizza Margherita

(The original pizza from Italy)

Makes one 12-inch pizza

- 10 ounces room-temperature pizza dough
- 4 cups flour
- 6 ounces of mozzarella di bufala (buffalo mozzarella), sliced into 4 (fresh-water mozzarella can be substituted)
- 4 ounces (one pizza ladle) plum tomato sauce (recipe follows)
- 1 tbsp. grated parmigiana cheese
- 1 tsp. of extra virgin olive oil
- 5 basil leaves, torn in half

Take dough out of refrigerator and let stand at room temperature for 1 hour.

Pour flour into large mixing bowl. Dip dough into flour, covering all sides, so that dough does not stick to your hands. Stretch out dough as thinly as possible onto lightly greased (with olive or vegetable oil) pizza pan.

Pour one ladle of plum tomato sauce onto center of dough and spread with bottom of ladle in circular motion around dough leaving the outer 1/2-inch plain to create crust. Place mozzarella evenly over pizza. Sprinkle parmigiana cheese on top.

Cook at 450°F for 15–20 minutes, or till crust is crispy and cheese has melted. To finish, drizzle about 1 tsp. olive oil on pizza and toss on basil leaves. Mangia!



### Plum Tomato Sauce

- 2 whole peeled plum tomatoes
- 1/4 cup juice from the can of tomatoes
- 1 large chopped garlic clove
- 1 tsp. extra virgin olive oil
- Pinch black pepper
- Pinch salt
- Pinch red pepper flakes
- 3 chopped fresh basil leaves

Squeeze tomatoes with juice until crushed. Add remaining ingredients. Stir together, refrigerate overnight.

## Mama Mia's Pizza & Café



Giuseppe and  
Lauren Griso

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*Benvenuto e buon appetito!*

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185 Ballston Ave., Saratoga Springs

**(518) 583-7783**

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