



The Savory Connection

Unearthing the Possibilities with Nature's Hidden Treasure



2009 Pizza Flavor Trends



Chef Peter Leonavicius of Toasted Pheasant Bistro, Tampa, Fla., tops his Paris Pizza with Portabellas, Boursin and brie cheese, tomatoes and grilled chicken.

Tough financial times turn consumers to the indulgence of comfort foods, while the ever more adventurous customer is eager to experiment with gourmet pizza flavor profiles.

Comfort foods

National Public Radio food commentator Bonny Wolf states that in the midst of economic doldrums, consumers are looking to the allure of comfort foods with simple, natural ingredients and creative twists on childhood favorites.

Trend in action: Mushrooms' meaty and satisfying flavor adds value perception and a sense of indulgence to any pizza.

Experimental and innovative flavors

Consumers are eager to try innovative, cross-cultural and regional flavors, explains editor Allison Sebolt in the November 2008 issue of *Food Business News*. **Trend in action:** Chef Simone Chou of Arizmendi Bakery in San Francisco makes a pizza with shiitake mushrooms, bok choy and a sesame ginger garlic vinaigrette.



Exotic mushrooms

Chefs named exotic mushrooms, such as shiitake, oyster and Portabellas, as a "hot" item in the National Restaurant Association's Chef Survey of "What's Hot in 2009." Exotic mushrooms placed in the top 10 list of "What's Hot in Produce."

Trend in action: California Pizza Kitchen's Wild Mushroom Pizza includes fresh cremini, shiitake, Portabella and white mushrooms with a mushroom walnut pesto.

Innovative, thin sauces

According to the January 2009 issue of *Pizza Marketing Quarterly (PMQ)*, thinner, lighter sauces are needed to go along with the trend towards thinner crusts. Higher quality, zippy, spicy sauces that pack a punch can replace a heavy marinara, plus operators can use less because the sauce has more depth. Consumers appreciate sauces with a subtle twist, such as the inclusion of cream, fresh mushrooms or pepper flakes.

Trend in action: Boston's Gourmet Pizza serves an Extreme Mushroom Pizza with mushroom pesto.



Chef Andrew Hunter of Wolfgang Puck Express Talks Pizza:

Andrew Hunter, vice president of culinary development for Wolfgang Puck Worldwide and a true mushroom aficionado, shares some tips on making the perfect mushroom pizza.

How do you prepare your mushrooms before putting them on your pizza?

We sauté fresh mushrooms in olive oil, garlic, salt and pepper before putting them on the pizza. Mushrooms are always on top of the cheese. They're what folks are paying for.

What is your best selling pizza?

Our best selling pizza is pepperoni and fresh mushroom. The sautéed mushrooms marinate in their own juice for up to two days until they're a mahogany color. We add some of the marinade as a seasoning on the pizza for added flavor.

What toppings and flavors pair best with mushrooms?

Fresh mushrooms are as delicious with pedestrian pepperoni as they are with exotic meats and cheeses. They taste best enhanced with garlic, butter, dry sherry and fresh herbs.

What is your favorite pizza at Wolfgang Puck Express?

My favorite is our Wild Mushroom and Caramelized Pearl Onion Pizza. It's topped with shiitake and Portabella mushrooms, Gruyere cheese, pearl onions and lightly dressed arugula and Parmesan shards.



Getting Your Slice of the Pie: Business Strategies for 2009

2009 looks to offer mixed blessings for pizzeria operators as consumers are trading down to cheaper options, while eating out less and trying to cut down on spending overall. According to pizza industry news service pizzamarketplace.com, the following are top pizza trends for 2009.



Sustainable and healthy offerings are in higher demand

Pizzerias will continue to search for ways to become greener operations and offer healthier menu items and vegetarian options. In 2003, only two new organic or all-natural pizza products were launched; in 2008, 53 new items were launched.

Papa John's introduced a whole wheat pizza crust in mid-2008. **Pizza Hut** launched its "All Natural" pizza in January 2009. According to Mushroom Council's 2006 Consumer Research report, consumers perceive mushrooms as having a "healthy halo" that add freshness and value to their meal.

Did you know... Mushrooms are the #1 vegetable topping on pizza (MenuMine 2008).



Increasing importance of social networking

Social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter will play an increasingly important role in the restaurant industry. In 2008, several major pizza chains launched Facebook pages, including **Papa John's** and **Pizza Hut**. **Pizza Hut** even takes orders through Facebook. According to *Pizza Today*, check averages are 18 percent higher with online ordering versus regular table or phone orders.

Did you know... You can become a Facebook fan of the Mushroom Channel and find lots of great recipe ideas on the site. Please visit www.MushroomChannel.com.

Consumers continue to trade down from fine dining and casual

The continuing recession will pressure financially strapped consumers to eat out less as consumers trade down from casual dining to less expensive alternatives.

Did you know... Fresh mushrooms add sophistication at a lower cost than many other gourmet items.



Getting the Most out of your Mushrooms

Fresh Versus Canned: The average cost of canned mushrooms is typically about \$0.10 per ounce of drained weight. Fresh mushrooms typically cost an average of about \$0.08 per ounce. Fresh mushrooms are not only less expensive, but also add more flavor and value per pound. About 41 slices of medium-sized fresh mushrooms are needed to cover a 16" pizza.

On the Cutting Edge: New Mushroom Pizza Items



Milano Roastano: Portabella mushrooms, oven roasted garlic, pepperoni and sausage, \$21.99 (**Round Table Pizza**).



Chicken, Mushroom and Roasted Garlic Pizza: With grilled onions, mozzarella and parmesan, \$10.95 (**Cheesecake Factory**).



Pizza Bianco: Ricotta cheese, mozzarella, Italian-style sausage or fire-roasted chicken, mushrooms, pine nuts, olive oil and garlic sauce, \$17.95 (**Red Brick Pizza**).



Spinach and Mushroom Pizza Bagel: Vegetarians will be wowed by the spinach and mushroom pizza bagel baked with sautéed spinach, mushrooms and cheese complemented by Einstein Bros.' signature garlic herb shmeat, \$3.69 (**Einstein Brothers**).

The Savory Connection is a publication of the Mushroom Council for professionals in the foodservice industry. Feel free to share this information with your associates.

