



Limited-Service, Unlimited Possibilities

Top of Mind

Fresh, upscale toppings spice up pizza offerings.



September 2014 — Over the past century, Americans have developed a special craving for certain foods, both at home and in restaurants—items like burgers and fries, sandwiches and fried chicken.

And then there's pizza. One of the nation's most beloved meals, pizza is the sum of varied parts: crust, sauce, cheese, meat or other proteins, vegetables, and the baking style. All are important, but the toppings are the real ingredient that gives customers and operators alike room

concept," says Anthony Carron, "Toppings are beautiful, they're

Operators today are opting for growth of new fast-casual pizza own pies.

"Consumers really do still like th something different," says Kelly consulting firm Technomic Inc.

Pizza has always been a build-y adds. At the same time, diners l

"That's why we see interest in th with regional or ethnic flavors," looking for something new."

Many restaurants are also cater cheese that gives vegans a fulle

The most popular toppings are of Americans wanted Mozzarella percent) as the top meat and ve followed by sausage (48 percent tomatoes (42 percent).

"One interesting thing we saw is consumers," says Rachel Tracy, managing director of the Chicago-based panel, which explores culinary topics with food industry professionals and consumers.

The most popular toppings are no surprise. A Culinary Visions Panel survey this year found that 79 percent of Americans wanted Mozzarella on their "dream pizza," with pepperoni (55 percent) and mushrooms (50 percent) as the top meat and vegetable, respectively. Parmesan cheese was also popular, at 57 percent, followed by sausage (48 percent), onions and bacon (both 46 percent), green peppers (43 percent), and tomatoes (42 percent).

"One interesting thing we saw is that some of the different cheese types are becoming top of mind with consumers," says Rachel Tracy, managing director of the Chicago-based panel, which explores culinary topics with food industry professionals and consumers.

More than 70 percent of those surveyed said they would definitely or probably order a four-cheese pizza with Mozzarella, Parmesan, Gorgonzola, and goat cheese. Only a four-meat specialty pizza scored higher.

The survey also found some growth in those who might choose breakfast or dessert pizzas. A breakfast pizza usually adds eggs to traditional pizzeria toppings like bacon, ham, and sausage. Dessert pizzas typically include chocolate, caramel, or fruit.

The Culinary Visions survey found that some topping choices differ widely among demographic groups. Mushrooms and sausage were popular with more than half of people ages 55 and over, but with fewer than 40 percent of Millennials.