

FOOD

9 Pizza Pro Tips From the Woman Who Created the Stuffed Crust

In honor of National Pizza Party Day.



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We often take pizza for granted, in that it's miraculously there in our deepest, darkest moments ([post-breakup](#) snack, anyone?) and shows up at 1 a.m. after a solid night of cramming for an exam. Given that [Americans eat 350 slices of pizza per second](#), it's likely played an important role in your life at some point.

But the pizza wheel was reinvented thanks to Patty Scheibmeir, who spent 14 years leading research and development at [Pizza Hut](#), and then created the game-changing stuffed-crust pizza in the '90s. Currently vice president of R&D and innovation at [Pie Five Pizza](#) and [Pizza Inn](#), her career has taken her to cheesy places. And she knows exactly how to find the best pizza out there. What should you look for? What's the safest bet on the menu? There's no such thing as bad pizza, but there's such thing as better pizza. And here's how to find it.

1) Strive for the "ideal" slice.

A great pizza is difficult to define, but when it disappears from your plate leaving you with little more than a broken heart and fond memories, that's when you know. Typically, it has a crust made from scratch daily, sauces without preservatives, a blanket of freshly grated, gooey cheese, and an assortment of fresh, colorful toppings.

2) For a safe bet, opt for the signature pizza on the menu.

Chances are, it's the brain-child of someone who's spent countless hours in a test kitchen experimenting with different pizza prototypes before settling on the perfect combinations. "Essentially, any pizza with a unique name that you can order off the menu without having to list the ingredients or make any major decisions about crusts, sauces, or toppings would be considered a signature pizza," says Scheibmeir. When creating her own iterations, she draws inspirations from ethnic cuisines like Mexican and Greek. Vacation in your mouth?

3) Step outside the ordinary pizza box.

Gone are the days of pizza boasting strictly Italian flavors. As a rule, if the combination or type of cuisine tastes great on its own, putting it on a pizza will only enhance it. Think of tandoori chicken and curry sauce, Thai peanut sauce and cilantro, or smoked salmon and capers.

4) Get a bang for your buck (cash for your crust?).

The idea for stuffed-crust pizza came to Scheibmeir when someone at a focus group told her that he never ate the crusts on his pizza and usually fed them to his dog as "pizza bones." As a fan of every part of the pizza — even the crust — she was disappointed to hear that. But, it did spark an idea: She bought a package of string cheese and started rolling it into dough. "You could say I was determined to make a crust so undeniably delicious that nobody would dare throw it away or feed it to their dog," she says. If you know the crust will head straight to the trash, go ahead and get cheesy with it.

5) Piling on the toppings beats minimal any day.

...According to Scheibmeir, that is. Though loading up on add-ons can really add up for students on a budget, many pizzerias, (like Pie Five and [Pieology](#)), offer flat rates for unlimited toppings, AKA unlimited possibilities. But want a piping hot pizza in less time? Cool it on the toppings. Because when you want pizza, you probably want it now.

6) Notice the language on the menu as an indicator of quality.

Look for words like made-from-scratch, all-natural, and artisan. Notice if they have options for guests with different dietary restrictions or preferences like gluten-free crusts, vegetarian toppings, or vegan substitutions. This shows they pay attention to detail, and that their recipes are quite literally made with love.

7) Say cheese... in moderation.

If you're piling cheese on your pizza to mask the sauce, then you're doing it wrong. The ideal cheese, whether a classic mozzarella or an adventurous mix of ricotta and parmesan, blends seamlessly with the sauce and crust to make for a perfectly balanced bite. And don't feel pressured to go dairy when you could opt for vegan go-to brands like [Daiya](#) and [Follow Your Heart](#) if you don't eat dairy products and are experimenting with recipes home.

8) Experiment with sauces.

If it's not broke, don't fix it, and that's why many of us rarely deviate from the tomato sauce prototype. But did you know there's a sauce world out there filled with creamy Alfredo sauces and Sriracha marinara? The great thing about customizing your own pizzas is that you have the freedom to experiment with different tastes. The dough is your canvas and the sauce is your paintbrush. You wouldn't paint a portrait in one color, would you?

9) Cheat with a frozen pizza.

Frozen pizza is a budget menu staple, but it doesn't have to taste like you're missing out on the real thing. When you're in a pinch, opt for a frozen plain cheese pizza. For just a few dollars more, buy toppings like pepperoni, shredded mozzarella cheese, and fresh veggies (the brighter the pigment, the more nutrients!). In the several minutes it takes to bake, chop your toppings then embellish your plain cheese pizza, and pop the pie back in the oven to lightly bake your toppings. Genius.

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<http://www.teenvogue.com/story/9-tips-find-make-best-pizza-national-pizza-party-day>