



# Did You Know We Grow Pizza in Kansas?



It is believed that the Greeks first baked pizza in Italy between 730 and 130 B.C. The pizza consisted of a flat, round bread baked with oils, garlic, herbs, olives, vegetables and covered with cheese. A rim of crust around the outside was left to hold onto. When Italians immigrated to the United States they brought the pizza idea with them. The first pizzeria opened in New York City.

Today, each American consumes 22.5 pounds of pizza a year. As a nation that means we eat 90 acres of pizza per day (an acre is the size of a football field). Only hamburgers sell more often than pizza.

**CRUST** – Pizza crust is made from wheat, which has traveled through many processes before we take a bite.

- The farmer plants wheat kernels in the ground. When the wheat is ready to harvest, the farmer combines the wheat in the field then loads it into trucks to haul to the elevator.
- The wheat is taken from the elevator to a terminal where it is put through a cleaning process.
- Next the wheat is sold to various industries that use it to make food or feed.
- If the wheat will be used for food, it is shipped to a mill where it is processed to become flour.
- Wheat flour contains a protein called gluten. To make bread, active yeast, warm water and other ingredients are added to the flour. The gluten traps the air bubbles the yeast releases and causes the bread to rise.

**TOMATO SAUCE** – Tomatoes were once thought to be poisonous. Classified as a member of the nightshade family, people were afraid to eat them. Tomatoes were first grown as ornamental plants and were called the “love apple.” Toward the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century this notion was dispelled and the tomato finally took its place as one of our most popular vegetables. It’s the fourth most popular vegetable (potatoes, lettuce and onions precede it).

**CHEESE** – Cheese is a healthy food made from milk. Farmers once milked their cows by hand. Today they use milking machines with vacuum to pull the milk from the cow’s udder. The process of making cheese involves these basic steps:

- Processing the milk. The milk is heated and quickly cooled, a process called pasteurizing. This kills any harmful bacteria.
- Separating the curd. After the milk has been processed, it is treated to form a soft, custard-like substance called curd. Curd contains a liquid called whey which must be taken through a special process before making cheese.
- Treating the curd. Curd is broken into small pieces for pressing. During pressing, more whey drains and the curd is shaped into blocks or wheels.
- Ripening. Cheese is aged in storage rooms or warehouses (this helps give cheese its flavor). Aging times vary for different types of cheese. The longer the aging period, the sharper the cheese’s flavor.
- Packaging. After being aged, cheese is packaged in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. Some cheeses are sliced at the factory and sealed in foil or plastic.

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**PEPPERONI & SAUSAGE** – You only need a few minutes to eat a piece of pizza, but do you know it takes almost six months from the time a pig is born to produce a 250 pound animal ready for processing?

- Often a farmer has many sows (mother pigs) in his care and depends on these sows to produce pigs for his income. Therefore, it is in the farmer’s best interest to have healthy well cared for animals.
- Pigs may be sold at an auction market or sale barn, or may be bought directly by an order buyer who comes to the finishing houses to buy for a packer.
- Meat inspectors employed by the United States Department of Agriculture inspect live pigs, pig carcasses and the entire packing plant to make sure that pork is safe to eat.
- About half of the pork produced in the United States is sold in supermarkets. The remaining pork is consumed in restaurants, hospitals, schools and business cafeterias.

**MUSHROOMS** – Of the approximately 3,000 different species of mushrooms that grow in the United States, only 2,000 of them are NOT poisonous. Mushrooms lack chlorophyll, the green substance most plants use to make food so they survive mainly by absorbing food material from their surroundings.

The most popular mushroom is known as the table mushroom. When a table mushroom is young it has a white or tan cap with pink gills and as it matures the gills turn brown. This mushroom is commercially cultivated in specially designed mushroom houses where the farmer carefully controls the temperature and moisture.

**PEPPERS** – There are many varieties of garden peppers, but most American gardeners prefer the large-fruited sweet pepper. Peppers are usually eaten in their immature green stage but are also delicious after they have fully ripened and turned red or yellow. Green peppers grow on small bushy plants. The peppers have seeds in them so they are the female part of the plant, thus they are actually fruits.

Don’t confuse the peppers you grow in your garden with those used for seasoning. When Columbus found the West Indian natives growing a hot tasting vegetable, he thought he had found one of the spices he was seeking on his voyage, and he named it “pepper”. The garden pepper is not related to the true pepper used in your kitchen with salt.

**ONIONS** – Onions were first cultivated in middle Asia and later became a favorite food of the Egyptians. Introduced to America by Spanish explorers, the onion was a mainstay of early colonists’ diet.

Onions are a tasty vegetable that add flavor to our food. Onions are raised either from seed or from “sets.” Onion bulbs grow underground and have long green tops. Young onions, before the bulb develops, are called scallions. Onions are often picked by hand or machine, cleaned and sent just as they are to grocery stores or processing plants.

