

"Always Independent, Never Alone"

# THE INDEPENDENT

**First Edition**  
The insights and inspiration you need to stay at the heart of your community.

Vol. 1 / Issue No. 002

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YESTERDAY → TODAY → TOMORROW → ALWAYS

PUBLISHED BY



FREE FOR PIZZERIA OWNERS

CHAIN

# PIZZA IS OVER!

THE FUTURE IS INDEPENDENT

By ILIR SELA

Anyone with a pizzeria knows the industry moves in cycles. Some years, we're fist-deep in discount wars. Other years, it's a battle of delivery apps. But then there are those years when the industry somewhat resets itself, and a new baseline is set for how we move forward.

I'm calling it: this is a reset year. [SEE PAGE TWO](#)

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WHERE INDEPENDENT PIZZA IS HEADING BASED ON WHAT YOU TOLD US

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WHAT THE CHAINS DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR MENU

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HOW LABOR COSTS ARE ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS GAMBLERS

plus MORE!

**PAGE 11**

YOU MIGHT NEED WAY LESS EXPERIENCE THAN YOU THINK TO THRIVE

**CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE**

Over the past twelve months, I've talked to various pizzeria owners from LA to NYC, and everywhere in between. The

**COVER STORY** third-generation owners and shops that just opened

their doors for the very first time. Regardless of shop legacy, they're all trying to work through the same issues: costs are up, customers are more selective than ever, and time continues to be a huge restraint.

Then there are the chains with their endless budgets and nationwide advertising campaigns. But I believe the future of pizza does not belong to the biggest players. It belongs to the best owners.

Customers don't want "cheap" pizza — they want better ingredients. They want a shop that feels real. They're more interested in quality and willing to shell out a couple extra bucks for a better slice of pizza.

Big chains still cling to the belief they'll win on price and scale. More locations, lower costs, aggressive promotions. Celebrity endorsements. Cheap gimmicks. (No one ever asked for the P'Zolo.) That model is dying out. And for the independent shops across the country, this is tremendously good news.

In conversations with owners (and the data we have at Slice), it's clear that customers are looking for quality over frequency. Yes, this could mean they are ordering slightly less often. But when they do place a pizza order, they want it to be worth it. That means that the flavor, consistency, and experience only your shop can offer matters more than ever — and that your average order value may climb.

Part of this experience includes making the whole process of ordering a pizza as smooth as possible. Which is why updated technology is no longer optional. Customers expect to find you online. They expect seamless ordering. They expect accuracy. They expect speed. They expect dependable confirmation texts and reliable pickup times.

The trap you need to be careful about not falling into with technology, though, is relying on it to do everything. It can help with online ordering, sure, as well as a handful of other tasks. But it should never be a substitute for hospitality and the one-to-one connection customers love about their neighborhood pizzeria. You didn't start a pizzeria to one day evolve it into a tech company. You're here to make pizza.

questions will be the difference between merely surviving and actually thriving. And speaking of thriving, understanding the speed of trends, and knowing where you fit in with them gives you an advantage.

Chains struggle with trends, as much as their advertising would have you believe otherwise. When it comes to topping popularity, crust styles, regional flavors, their size

their communities — not just food businesses.

Your regulars know your staff by name. You sponsor a local baseball team. You donate to the fundraisers. The post-game celebrations (and commiserations) take place within your walls. You know who likes it extra crispy — and who likes it par-baked. No national brand can replicate that.

If I could scream one thing from the rooftops right now it's that community isn't a marketing strategy, it's your lifeblood. Don't be afraid to tell your story. Show your kitchen. Introduce your staff. Highlight your history — the more visible and human you can make your shop within your community, whether in person, on social media, or elsewhere, the stronger the connection becomes between you and your customers.

**I AM OPTIMISTIC**

I've seen what independent owners do when they commit fully. I've seen shops double down on quality and raise their average ticket without losing loyalty. I've seen operators adopt better systems and get back their time. I've seen families rebuild after difficult years and come back stronger.

The narrative that "pizza is declining" misses the bigger story.

The era of cheap, undifferentiated pizza may be slowing. But the era of intentional, high-quality, community-rooted pizza is accelerating. The future will not reward complacency. It will reward consistency. It will reward clarity. It will reward the shops that treat every ticket as the most important ticket they have.

Lean into your advantage.

Because the future of pizza isn't corporate.

It's local. ▶



**Ilir Sela**, Slice Founder & CEO

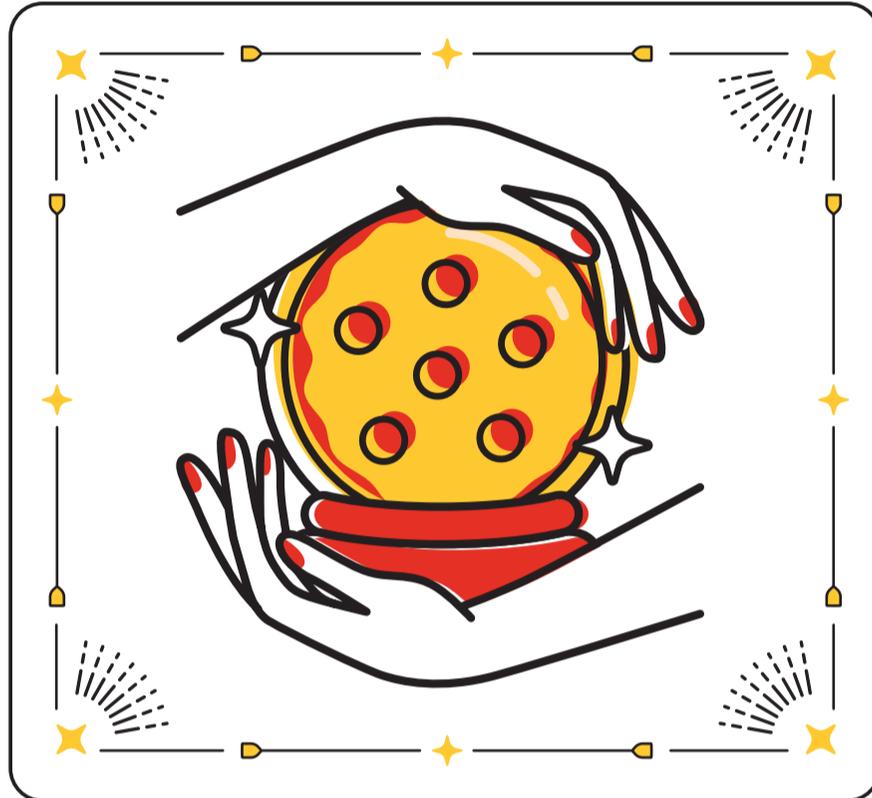


Illustration by Slice

Tech should just support what you're doing and make your life easier, not complicate it. But this does get us into more sensitive topics — tight margins, expensive labor, and volatile food costs. There's also the threat of human error, whether we like it or not. The extra minute per phone call, the mis-entered order, an unnecessary discount — these stack up faster than most owners realize. This coming year will prove that precision matters more than volume.

This will come down to understanding the numbers your shop produced inside and out. You don't need a fancy spreadsheet, just visibility. Where are orders coming from? What's your online average order value versus phone? Which days are your most profitable? Where are you bleeding time? Knowing the answers to these

and corporate red tape have them struggling to keep up. Your shop, though, can act on it tomorrow if you want. Because why not?

You have agility. You can test a special. You can experiment with limited-time pizzas. You can spotlight local ingredients grown by a farmer you actually know and respect. You can respond to your neighborhood, and what they want, faster than any national brand. Using this flexibility intentionally is a strategic advantage. And it's one that will help the independent pizzerias across the country succeed.

But like I said, it's not about jumping on every trend. It's about knowing your identity and truly owning it. I've said this before, and I'll say it again: independent pizzerias are the heart of

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Built for pizzerias.

# OWNER'S POV: 2026 PIZZA INDUSTRY PREDICTIONS

## PREDICTION 1

### INDUSTRY PREDICTION:

**CONSUMERS ARE AVOIDING FAST AND CHEAP, MASS PRODUCED PIZZA**

"The idea that pizzerias can rely on cheap and fast to stay busy will die in 2026. People care more about quality now, and they can taste the difference."

— **Sadeer Oraha**, Del Cerro Pizza @delcerropizza

## PREDICTION 3

### LOCAL PREDICTION:

**FRESH INGREDIENTS WILL WIN, AND THE CHAINS WILL LOSE**

"People understand that big [chains] are giving them sh\*t. They want more fresh and upscale [ingredients]."

— **Esteban C.**, Leña Ardiendo Pizza @lenaardiendopizza

## PREDICTION 5

### TRUTH PREDICTION:

**GOOD PIZZA ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH ANYMORE**

"We are the first restaurant in the world to get **C.L.E.A.N.\*** certified. I think we will slowly but surely get more customers looking for a better choice."

\*Conscious, Live, Ethical, Active, and Nourishing.

— **Frank**, Josephine's Pizza and Pastaria

## PREDICTION 2

### NATIONAL TREND:

**CAPITALIZING ON SOCIAL TRENDS WILL RESULT IN MORE BUSINESS**

"Sweet Sauce pizza has been a big thing in our area for years (Northeast Pennsylvania). I wonder if people have heard of it elsewhere."

— **Carl "Sam" Hill**, Whatinthe Sam Hill's @whatinthesamhills

## PREDICTION 4

### LOCAL PREDICTION:

**DON'T DO EVERYTHING. DO THE RIGHT THINGS.**

"Community involvement [is key]. Because we took the lead to feed Snap families our customer base exploded with support. We will be into community support 200%."

— **Tony and Alba's Pizza and Pasta** @tonyalbaspizza

## PREDICTION 6

### HOT TAKES: 2026 MINDSET...

**GO ALL IN!**

"No one talks about the sleepless nights leading up to paying sales tax & bills."

— **Tori Tiso**, Tori T's Pizzeria @toritspizzeria

**READ THE FULL ARTICLE ON OUR BLOG:**

**[SLICE.COM/PREDICTIONS](https://slice.com/predictions)**

# WHEN LESS ON THE MENU MEANS MORE FOR THE BUSINESS

By **BRUCE IRVING**

At Garçon SuperSlice in Salem, Massachusetts, the menu board is notable for its simplicity. There are nine pizzas — all 18-inch pies — along with a few sandwiches and salads. For owner Keenan, the limited selection is intentional. By keeping the menu tight, the shop maintains quality and speed while allowing a small team to run the kitchen efficiently.



Keenan, Garçon SuperSlice

Many pizzeria owners take the opposite approach. Faced with competition and shifting customer tastes, they expand their menus with more specialty pies, appetizers and variations. But as menus grow, operations become more complicated. Training takes longer, food costs rise and kitchens must manage more ingredients and prep during the rush.

A smaller menu can simplify nearly every part of the business. At Garçon SuperSlice, the streamlined offering allows the kitchen to run with just two people — one preparing pizzas and the other managing the oven. Each worker can step into the other role if needed, creating a flexible system that helps the shop move quickly during busy periods. Customers benefit as well. Fewer choices make ordering easier and faster, while a curated menu signals confidence in the food being served.

The lesson is simple: success doesn't come from offering everything. Often, focusing on fewer items — and doing them exceptionally well — leads to a stronger kitchen, a clearer brand and a better customer experience. It's less about your resume, and more about your passion. It's the patience and attention that comes from genuinely caring about what you're making. Keenan eats pizza every day. He makes pizza every day. That's not a habit. That's an obsession. That's your jumping-off point. ▶

## YOU ARE THE PIZZA INDUSTRY

**21K** shops

**57K** shops



**BIG PIZZA CHAINS**



**INDEPENDENT BRANDS**

## THE SAUCE

Get tips, trends, and tools to help your pizzeria thrive.

[Slice.com/Blog](https://slice.com/blog)



## THE \$18,000 PHONE CALL

By WILL PRICE

Answering the phone at a pizzeria might feel like an essential part of running the business, but recent data suggests it could be costing shop owners far more than they realize. For independent pizza restaurants with annual sales between \$750,000 and \$1.25 million, constant phone traffic is more than just an interruption; it's a hidden expense that adds up to thousands of dollars a year. While a ringing phone often feels productive — bringing in orders, questions and repeat customers — the time spent on calls can pull staff away from the make line, lead to repeated or corrected orders, and slow down the entire operation. According to Slice data, shops that reduce the friction of manual calls and shift customers toward digital ordering save the equivalent of 80–100 labor hours each month. Over the course of a year, that adds up to between 960 and 1,200 hours. At a labor cost of about \$15 per hour, pizzerias are spending roughly \$14,400 to \$18,000 annually just to manage phone orders.

The difference between handling phone orders and adopting online ordering is not just financial; it also affects the rhythm of the kitchen. When staff spends much of their shift on the phone, they are constantly interrupted, and each call represents small, incremental losses in efficiency and focus. In contrast, online orders do not interrupt production, do

Reducing reliance on phone calls also eases the strain on employees and the flow of work during peak hours. Mistakes tend to decrease when orders are entered directly into a system rather than dictated over the phone and then manually entered by staff already juggling multiple tasks. Because of this, shops often experience a calmer, more controlled

— a goal few shop owners consider realistic — the focus is on easing the burden they place on a kitchen. By making online ordering easier and more accessible to regular customers, payment processes automated, and the experience smoother for callers, shops can limit how much time employees spend on repetitive tasks.



Photo by Slice

not require repeated clarifications, and eliminate the need for manual payment handling. Beyond reducing labor costs, shops that encourage digital ordering often find that the average order size increases. Data shows the typical online order has a higher dollar value than a phone order, presenting an opportunity for greater revenue without increasing workload.

environment once phone call volume is lowered, with shorter lines and less chaos at rush times. Owners report being able to staff more strategically, reducing burnout and improving service without cutting staff hours.

Slice offers tools designed to help pizzerias navigate this shift. Rather than eliminating phone orders entirely

**DIGITAL ORDERS SAVE THE EQUIVALENT OF 80–100 LABOR HOURS EVERY MONTH**

What many owners notice first after reducing phone order volume isn't immediately the financial saving but rather the shift in atmosphere. With fewer interruptions and a more predictable workflow, employees can focus on quality and efficiency, while owners often find they have time back in their day to focus on growth, menu innovation, and customer engagement in ways that phone orders never allowed. The choice to push customers toward digital ordering isn't just about cutting costs; it's about creating a more sustainable, streamlined business model in an era where technology continues to reshape the restaurant industry. ▶

## CHAIN FATIGUE? INDEPENDENTS SEE AN OPENING

By WILL PRICE

Recent national coverage has stoked fears that pizza's heyday might be behind it, pointing out that the nation's beloved pie has slipped in popularity rankings over the past few decades and that growth among big chain brands has slowed. Yet owners and operators who watch the market closely see something very different: what's really shifting isn't the popularity of pizza itself, but the kind of pizza people want and where they choose to get it. While major chains built their business on uniform menus, low prices and massive scale, consumers are increasingly judging their food on quality, experience and meaningful value — things that independent pizzerias, unburdened by cookie-cutter models, are uniquely positioned to deliver.

Despite stories suggesting pizza is falling out of favor, it remains one of the most eaten foods in America. Millions of Americans still enjoy pizza weekly, with roughly one in ten people eating it every day. What has changed is not hunger for pizza but consumer tolerance for mediocrity, especially from large, generic brands. Rather than settling for sameness, diners now seek fresher ingredients, creative

combinations and restaurants that offer something distinct. They expect ordering to be easy, menus to be transparent and the overall experience to feel personal — a combination that challenges the long-held advantages of national chains.

**TRUE OR FALSE: PIZZA IS DYING?**

Big chains are now contending with rising labor and ingredient costs they cannot easily pass on without alienating price-sensitive customers. Their standardized menus, once an asset, now feel bland to diners craving authenticity. Independent operators, by contrast, adapt quickly by tweaking menus, spotlighting local tastes and forging direct relationships with their customers. This agility allows smaller shops to keep pace even as larger brands struggle to reconcile uniformity with meaningful differentiation.

The meaning of "value" has also evolved. It is no longer simply about

being cheap but about transparent pricing, reliability and convenience without hidden fees. Locals are increasingly willing to pay a bit more when they feel welcomed and recognized — when food tastes good, ordering is simple and loyalty is earned through consistency rather than just the lowest price. This shift aligns with broader dining trends, where experience and personalization matter as much as the final check.

Perhaps the clearest dividing line in pizza's future comes down to how shops manage the digital side of their business. The industry's most resilient players are those that embrace direct digital ordering, own their customer data and make repeat business easier. As third-party marketplaces and phone calls give way to integrated online systems, shops that prioritize a seamless digital experience are better equipped to thrive in a slower demand environment. This digital-first approach does not just support survival — it lays the groundwork for sustained growth and stronger customer retention.

Menu innovation is no longer optional either. Far from pizza becoming boring, independent pizzerias are injecting fresh life into their offerings with specialty crusts, regional toppings and limited-time features that give customers reasons to return. Such experimentation fosters excitement around local brands in a way that large, traditional menus do not. Community ties further amplify

this advantage: local fundraisers, neighborhood events and genuine presence in the markets where they operate help independent shops cultivate loyalty that national advertising campaigns cannot easily replicate.

**CHAIN PIZZA = MEDIOCRE PIZZA**

Smart pizzeria owners are not reacting to headlines about decline with fear. They are prioritizing their digital platforms, crafting intentional value, experimenting carefully and investing in repeat customers over chasing every new trend. They understand that the era of the pizza chain dominating the landscape is giving way to a new chapter where independent shops can win by focusing on quality, connection and adaptability. Through the right tools, the next chapter of pizza isn't smaller — it's smarter. ▶

**Stay independent while gaining big chain benefits.**

[Slice.com/Family-Membership](https://Slice.com/Family-Membership)



# ROCHESTER'S NEWEST PIZZERIA ALREADY HAS A LINE OUT THE DOOR

By **TERRENCE MORASH**

Pizza Nota didn't arrive quietly. Since opening at 192 Anderson Avenue in Rochester's Neighborhood of the Arts (NOTA), the pizzeria has built a devoted following on the strength of its obsessive approach to the craft. The dough ferments for at least 72 hours before it ever sees an oven. Eat Local New York Pies are baked hot and fast in a coal-fired oven, drawing on New Haven's tradition of char while nodding to the New York style. It's a specific vision, and regulars have responded accordingly — showing up early, selling out the dough, and coming back.

Owner Rick Pereira and staff run a tight, focused operation, and keeping the customer experience just as sharp matters to them. That's where Slice comes in. Through the Slice Family Membership, Pizza Nota uses online ordering, a Slice POS system, and



Pizza Nota

custom-branded pizza boxes — tools that let a small shop operate with the polish of a much larger one, without losing what makes it feel local.

The Neighborhood of the Arts has long attracted people who care deeply about what they make, and Pizza Nota definitely belongs in that company. It's the kind of place that earns its reputation one pie at a time — and increasingly, one smooth, well-run order at a time too. ▶

# HOW TO MAKE SURE YOUR HOMETOWN PIZZA THRIVES IN A NEW CITY

By **WILL PRICE**

Lauren Hodson, the owner of Lefty's Chicago Pizzeria, has built more than just a business — she's created a family-style community at her two beloved San Diego locations. When she first arrived in the city, she noticed a significant population of fellow Chicago transplants and saw an opportunity to bring a taste of home to her new neighborhood. Over the years, Lauren has cultivated a loyal following of deep-dish pizza enthusiasts, many of whom she considers part of her extended family. One of her locations even features a cozy, living-room-inspired space where parents can relax while their kids enjoy a fun and welcoming environment.



Lauren Hodson, Lefty's Chicago Pizzeria

"It's really for the children," Lauren shares. "I've become 'the pizza lady' to so many kids, and then they grow up and want to work here. I've given a lot of them their first job... and it's such a rewarding experience."

Adding to Lefty's charm, Lauren commissions local artists to decorate her pizzerias, blending Chicago roots with San Diego flair. Her efforts have made Lefty's Chicago Pizzeria a cherished staple in the community. ▶

# HOW SLICE GAVE AMADEO PIZZERIA THE GIFT OF TIME

By **TERRENCE MORASH**

## WHEN YOU'RE RUNNING A PIZZERIA, EVERY MINUTE COUNTS

Arberie Karacica, owner of Amadeo Pizzeria in Secaucus, New Jersey, shares how Slice has helped her bring structure, professionalism, and calm to her fast-paced pizza operation.

Located near major tourist destinations with plenty of foot traffic, Amadeo serves long-time regulars and travelers alike.

Adding Slice to Amadeo wasn't a nice-to-have, it was a must for growth. Slice helped simplify day-to-day operations so the team could focus on consistency, hospitality, and service.

# DITCHING DELIVERY TO SAVE YOUR PIZZERIA

By **BRUCE IRVING**

For years, Ali and his family ran Sicily's Pizza with a massive menu, trying to please every customer. They offered everything from deep-dish to New York-style pies, stretching their kitchen and team to the limit. But despite their efforts, the business was running them instead of the other way around.

Then, they made a daring decision, they slashed the menu and focused on doing a few things exceptionally well. It wasn't an easy transition. Ali and his brother second-guessed themselves constantly, wondering if they were making a mistake. Would customers leave?

Would sales drop? Would all their hard work go to waste?

The first year was tough, but the results proved them right. By refining their recipes, simplifying their operations, and doubling down on naturally leavened dough and high-quality ingredients, they created something special. Customers responded, not just by staying, but by becoming loyal fans of the new Sicily's Pizza.

They also made another major change: ditching delivery. Instead of managing a chaotic fleet of drivers and dealing with inconsistent quality, Ali built a space that attracted customers to come in and experience the pizza at its best. It was a risk, but it allowed them to focus entirely on making great pizza without chasing sales.

Now, Sicily's Pizza is thriving. Sales are up, stress is down, and the business is stronger than ever. It's a powerful lesson for restaurant owners everywhere: sometimes, less is more. ▶



Ali Beydoun, Sicily's Pizza

**"Slice allows me to focus on the food and the service and not have to compromise the guest experience." — Arberie**

When Amadeo became a part of the Slice family, the shop was able to get valuable time back during busy shifts, bring organization to a high-volume pizzeria, run operations with one clear, unified system, and serve both loyal locals and out-of-town guests more efficiently. The partnership with Amadeo is an example of how Slice helps independent pizzerias thrive in

all aspects of their business.

From making more money and saving time by letting Slice manage phones, online orders, marketing, custom pizza boxes, and more, pizzerias can focus on what really matters: making great pizza and delivering amazing customer service. Not to mention getting some time back in their lives. ▶



Arberie Karacica, Amadeo Pizzeria

# PAGE SIX

By **TERRENCE MORASH**

**DALLAS** — Big hats, bigger conversations. DFW owners swapped shop stories from a Texas Rangers luxury box with Slice — where the drinks were cold, the ball was flying, and the competition stayed strictly on the field.

**NEW JERSEY** — The Garden State showed up. Owners closed out summer at a minor league showdown with Slice, and pizza influencer Julia Molinari made it a family affair, repping her parents' shop from the stands.

**NEW YORK** — Pinstripes and pizza pros. A Yankees luxury suite set the scene as New York and Connecticut owners huddled with Slice — part ballgame, part boardroom, all Bronx buzz.

**SAN FRANCISCO** — Call it a Bay Area summit. Slice's Bruce Irving made the rounds at a Giants game, where every inning delivered equal parts baseball and back-of-house banter.

**FORT MYERS** — Down in Southwest Florida, the Slice team worked alongside Pizzeria El Chocolate, helping the shop gear up to serve even more customers in its next chapter of growth.

**LOS ANGELES** — From delivering custom-designed boxes to Enzo's Pizzeria to hosting an owners meetup at Angel City Pizza, Slice made the rounds in L.A., bringing great shops together under the California sun. ▶



Dallas



Dallas



Dallas



Dallas



Dallas



Dallas



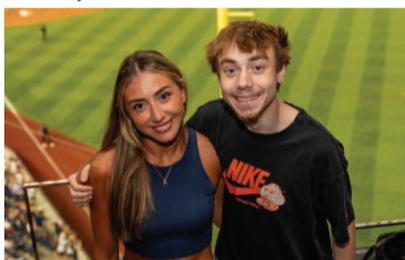
New Jersey



New Jersey



New Jersey



New York



New York



New York



New York



New York



San Francisco



San Francisco



San Francisco



San Francisco



San Francisco



San Francisco



Fort Myers



Los Angeles



Los Angeles

# ONLINE MENU TIPS THE CHAINS DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW

By **WILL PRICE**

Our data scientists combed through thousands of menus and millions of orders to determine how the most successful pizzerias approach their online menus. There's a lot of factors — everything from the number of items and modifiers to discounts and photos — and we've outlined what gets the best results. Here's how you can get the most out of your digital menu and make it easier for customers to complete their orders faster:

## 1 ADD MENU CATEGORIES

When it comes to ordering food online, customers want a menu that is easy to navigate and helps them decide what to order. One of the simplest ways to meet this need is to split your online menu into categories, much like you would do on a printed or display menu. Here are some ideas:

- Separate out appetizers, entrees, sides, drinks, kids, and desserts into different sections. Top-performing shops are 10% more likely to offer sections for kids and beverages.

- Add a highlight section for dishes to suit special dietary needs, such as gluten-free and vegetarian. Top-performing shops are 50% more likely

to have gluten-free products and 20% more likely to have vegetarian options.

- Create categories recommending meals for certain situations, like "Family Dinner for Four" or "Party Catering." Top-performing shops are 30% more likely to have separate sections for dinner and catering.

## 2 ADD MENU ITEM PHOTOS

There's a direct connection between menu photos and performance: 60% of the most successful shops include photographs for at least 20% of the items on their menus. Appetizing photos can make or break a customer's decision of where to order their meal. You should aim for pictures of every food item, but the minimum should be to have pics of your top 20 items.

## 3 ADD DESCRIPTIONS TO ALL MENU ITEMS

Your online customers don't have one of your servers or staff members nearby to answer questions or tell them what's special about a particular dish. Our data shows that it's important to include evocative item descriptions throughout your menu. This isn't surprising — if you had to choose between these two items, which would you pick: "Regular pie" or

"Fresh Neapolitan four-cheese pizza, cooked to toasted perfection in our wood-fired oven"? The pizzas are the same, but the second description is more likely to get customers hungry.

## 4 OFFER DISCOUNTS AND COUPONS

People can't resist a good deal and busy pizzerias know it: Top-performing shops are 20% more likely to offer discounts and 50% more likely to offer coupons. Consider offering an overall discount, percentage-off coupon, or the ever-popular perk of free delivery.

## 5 ADD MENU MODIFIERS

Customization is a top factor for shop success: It allows you to attract a wide range of customers who want to tailor orders to their taste. Plus, including an upcharge on modifiers is an excellent way to increase ticket size.

## 6 CREATE SPECIAL BUNDLE PACKAGES FOR LARGER ORDERS

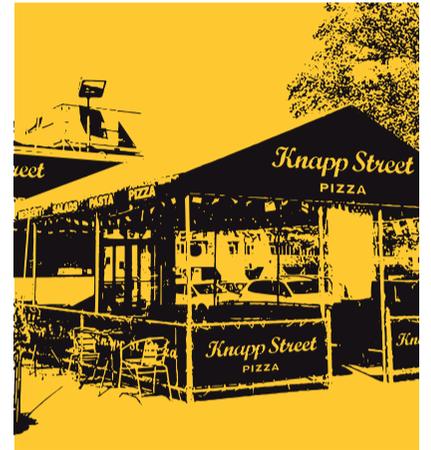
Whether it's dinner for two, a full family-style meal for six, or a package (like five pizzas for the price of four), bundles make life easier for customers and kitchens and work well for shops: The most successful pizzerias are 30% more likely to offer special bundle packages.

## 7 REMOVE LOW-SELLING ITEMS

More isn't always better — the most successful shops typically have fewer than 100 items on their menus. If most of your revenue comes from a small

number of items, consider removing items that don't sell well. This will make your menu easier to navigate and won't overwhelm potential customers.

At Slice, we're dedicated to empowering independent pizzerias. If you're working hard for your community, there's no need to go it alone. ▶



Knapp Street Pizza

## A FATHER-SON LEGACY AT KNAPP STREET PIZZA

By **BRUCE IRVING**

In a recent conversation with Nicholas and his father, Frank, the owners of Knapp Street Pizza in Brooklyn, we got a behind-the-scenes look at what it takes to run a successful pizzeria for generations to come. From working tirelessly to keep everything up to par — whether it's checking sauces, ensuring the dough is perfect, or handling over 600 tickets on busy days — their commitment to quality is unwavering.

Frank, who's been in the business since he was 16, admits that running a pizzeria is far from easy. "If it wasn't hard, everybody would do it," he says, highlighting the stress that comes with maintaining high standards. But despite the challenges, the duo remains passionate about what they do, understanding that to succeed in the pizza world, you need a team behind you.

The role of social media has also become a game-changer for their business. While initially hesitant about embracing online platforms, they've seen first-hand the power of social media to bring in customers from all over the world — people coming from as far as Europe and Canada after seeing their posts on Instagram.

Their approach to business is rooted in tradition, with a focus on quality ingredients, a well staffed team, and never losing sight of family. ▶

# THIS TEXAS PIZZA SHOP DITCHED TRADITION AND INVENTED A CRUST THAT LOCALS CRAVE



Conner, Sauce'd

By **BRUCE IRVING**

At Sauce'd in Grapevine, Texas, you'll find more than just pizza. You'll discover a story of marketing meets foodservice, innovation meets chaos, and bold decisions that changed everything. Owner Conner launched the business after years of dreaming and backyard experimenting, with no formal restaurant experience. What started in a conventional oven became a full-scale operation serving both Texas-style pizza and smashburgers. When Conner took over a second-generation New York pizza joint, he

flipped the script. Despite pushback, he stripped the menu of calzones, pastas, and subs to focus on pizza. Over time, he brought smashburgers into the mix. The result? Hundreds sold weekly, and customers crossing categories. Pizza fans became burger fans and vice versa, increasing the average ticket by about \$30.

The physical kitchen? Tight. But with smart staffing, Conner and his team made it work. Mistakes are fast and recoverable with burgers. Pizza? A 20-minute reset. Still, they handle both thanks to a clear line setup, a

powerful dough room nicknamed the "dojo," and a staff that knows how to hustle.

Marketing remains key. From early gimmicks like music videos to viral Instagram reels, Conner leaned on his marketing background and a willingness to be on camera. His advice? You are a media company first. Buy the camera, hit record, and get comfortable being uncomfortable. It's the only way to grow in today's food business world.

Inside the shop, you won't find typical sports bar memorabilia. Instead, framed jerseys from movie sports legends like Bobby Boucher and Jackie Moon set the tone. It's all part of making Sauce'd feel different.

For families, kids get their own dough balls at the table, and soon, they'll get to make their own mini pies. It's experiential, memorable, and smart marketing.

Looking back, Conner says he would have made changes earlier, fired some customers and staff quicker, avoided limiting labels like "New York-style," and trusted his dad more. But even with the bumps, the journey was worth it. Sauce'd is thriving on its own terms, and that's something any business owner can learn from. ▶

AVERAGE COST OF A 16" PIZZA:

NATIONAL AVERAGE:

**\$19.24**

URBAN AREAS:

**\$19.58**

SUBURBAN AREAS:

**\$18.84**

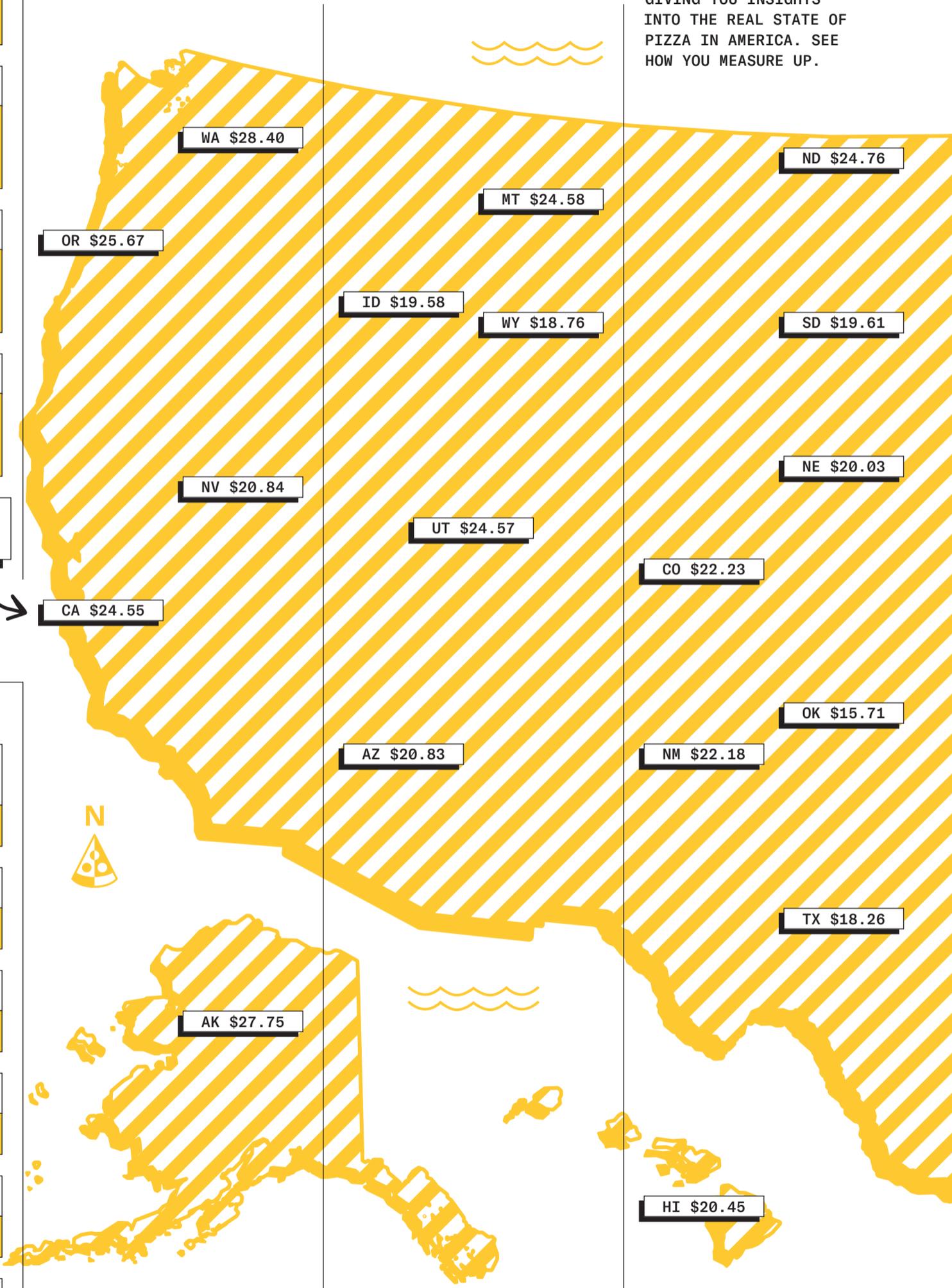
RURAL AREAS:

**\$18.83**

AVERAGE COST OF A 16" PIZZA BY STATE

# INDEPENDENT PIZZA BY THE NUMBERS

SLICE WORKS WITH TENS OF THOUSANDS OF SHOPS, GIVING YOU INSIGHTS INTO THE REAL STATE OF PIZZA IN AMERICA. SEE HOW YOU MEASURE UP.



## SERVICE:

AVERAGE PERCENT OF ORDERS THAT REQUIRE CUSTOMER SERVICE:

**1.59%**

AVERAGE FOR TOP-PERFORMING SHOPS:

**1.05%**

PERCENT OF SHOPS OFFERING DELIVERY:

**93.60%**

AVERAGE DELIVERY FEE:

**\$4.40**

PERCENT OF SHOPS OFFERING FREE DELIVERY:

**8.50%**

AVERAGE DELIVERY TIME IN MINUTES:

**56**

AVERAGE PICKUP TIME IN MINUTES:

**32**

NOT FUN FACT: HIDDEN LABOR COSTS CAN AMOUNT TO UP TO \$1,500 FOR THE AVERAGE PIZZERIA. SEE WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR ON PAGE 10.

PUBLISHED BY



it's all about regulars

# THE INDEPENDENT

## CUSTOMERS:

AVERAGE PERCENT OF SALES COMING FROM REPEAT CUSTOMERS:

**81.35**

AVERAGE NUMBER OF TIMES A CUSTOMER ORDERS PER MONTH FROM TOP PIZZERIAS:

**1.40**

DAY WITH THE LEAST ORDERS OF THE YEAR:

**THANKSGIVING**

## TIPS:

NATIONAL AVERAGE PERCENT TIP:

**11.10%**

URBAN AREAS:

**11.10%**

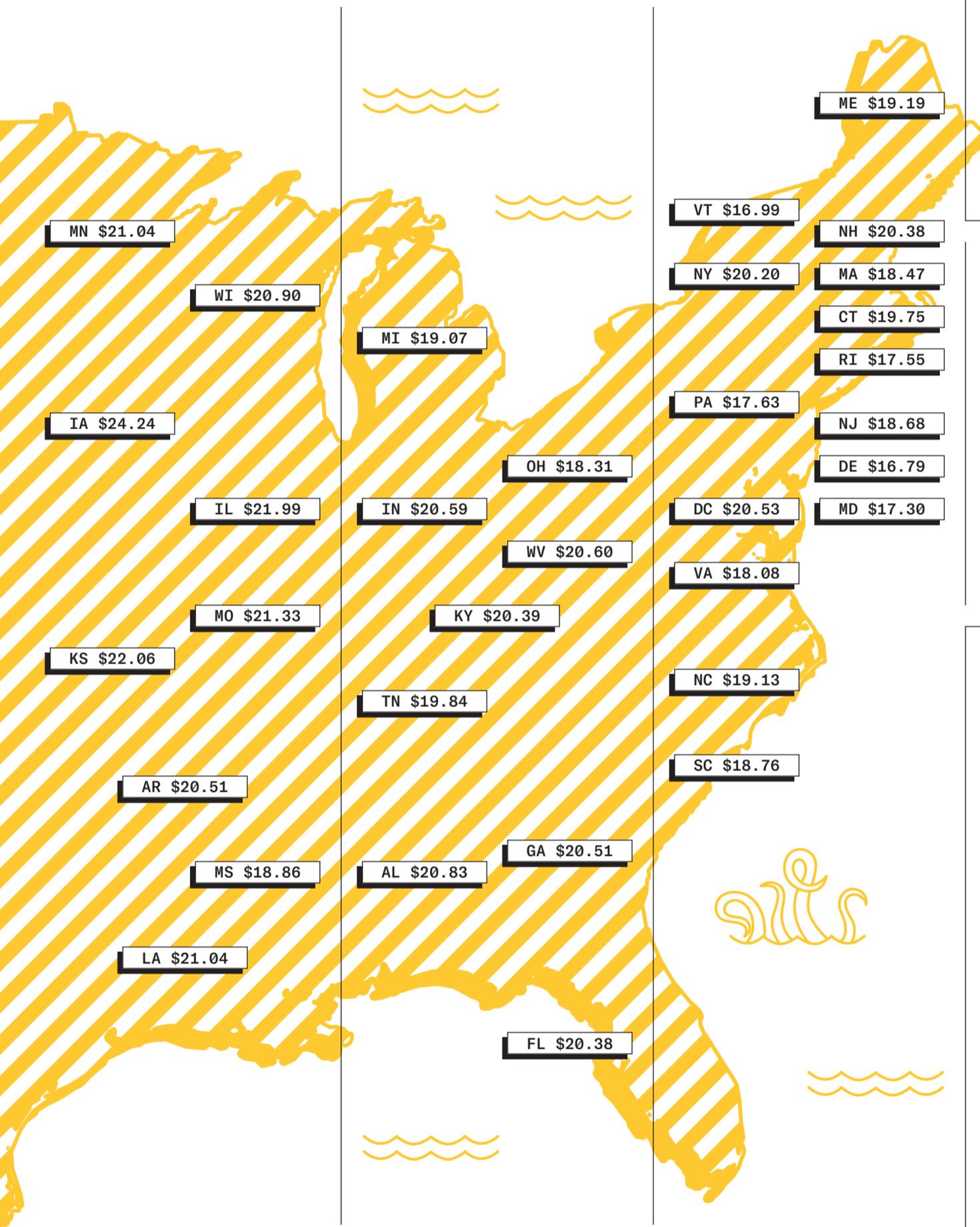
SUBURBAN AREAS:

**11.05%**

RURAL AREAS:

**11.15%**

FUN FACT: ROYAL PIZZA OF STATEN ISLAND, NY HAD THE MOST LOYAL CUSTOMERS IN 2025. GET TIPS FOR KEEPING CUSTOMERS HAPPY ON PAGE 13.



## MENU:

AVERAGE NUMBER OF ITEMS:

**140**

- TOP 5 TOPPINGS:
1. PEPPERONI
  2. MUSHROOMS
  3. SAUSAGE
  4. EXTRA CHEESE
  5. ONIONS

MOST ORDERED ITEMS THAT AREN'T PIZZA:

**SODA**

LEAST ORDERED ITEM:

**BREAKFAST**

- TOP 5 CATERING ITEMS:
1. PARTY WINGS
  2. CAESAR SALAD
  3. GARLIC KNOTS
  4. GARDEN SALAD
  5. JUMBO PARTY WINGS

PERCENT OF SHOPS OFFERING CATERING:

**26.00%**

## AVERAGE ORDER SIZE:

NATIONAL:

**\$35.18**

URBAN AREAS:

**\$35.00**

SUBURBAN AREAS:

**\$35.83**

RURAL AREAS:

**\$34.48**

ONLINE:

**\$43.59**

PHONE:

**\$28.00**

WALK-IN:

**\$22.38**

FUN FACT: ORDERS THROUGH SLICE'S PHONE ORDERING PRODUCT AVERAGE \$33.80 DUE TO THE TEAM'S ABILITY TO UPSSELL CUSTOMERS.

# ARE YOU PLAYING LABOR COST ROULETTE?

By WILL PRICE

For many independent pizzeria owners, sky-high labor costs feel like a mystery — a steady drain on profits that never quite makes sense on the books. New data from Slice suggests the problem isn't that labor is inherently out of control, but that much of it is inefficient, siphoning away dollars without improving food quality or the customer experience. What many operators overlook in their daily numbers is how much time staff spend on work that doesn't contribute to pizza production, and that hidden labor can cost shops roughly \$1,200 to \$1,500 a month if left unchecked.

In a typical pizzeria, labor accounts for roughly a quarter to more than a third of revenue, a figure that includes wages, payroll taxes and overtime. But when owners drill down into where those hours actually go, a surprising share of them is spent on tasks like taking orders over the phone, repeating instructions or correcting mistakes — all activities that interrupt kitchen flow without touching the dough or firing the oven. Even during busy shifts, staff who are pulled away to answer calls or clarify orders leave the production line understaffed, forcing shops to schedule more employees per shift just to keep up.

## STATS

Labor = 25–35% of a pizzeria's revenue

### 25–35%

Online ordering saves ~100 labor hours a month

### 100 hrs/mo

Hidden labor can cost shops ~\$1,200 to \$1,500 a month

### \$1,500/mo

Those interruptions aren't just inconvenient — they have real financial consequences. Slice's research shows that pizzerias that shift more orders to online channels can save between 80 and 100 labor hours each month, simply by removing manual order-taking from the workflow. At an estimated \$15 per hour in labor costs, that translates to a \$14,400–\$18,000 annual leak in profit that isn't the result of increased wages, but of time spent on work that could be automated or avoided. For a shop doing around \$1 million in annual sales, a single percentage point of inefficient labor can equate to roughly \$10,000 in lost profit.

The difference between online and phone orders goes beyond time saved. Data shows that average online orders are significantly higher in value than those taken by phone or at the register, and because they require no manual entry, they reduce errors and free staff to focus on production. This not only helps shops cut wasteful labor, but also drives higher average checks and smoother service. Shifting customers toward digital ordering doesn't mean cutting staff, but it does mean using existing labor more smartly, allowing teams to concentrate on cooking, customer care and quality control rather than repetitive administrative tasks.

Recognizing where labor inefficiency hides can change the way a shop looks at its bottom line. When owners feel "slammed but broke," it often isn't because the kitchen is overwhelmed — it's because they're paying valuable hours for work that doesn't directly produce pizzas. By encouraging more online orders and reducing interruptions on the floor, independent pizzerias can preserve their service levels, protect staff morale and improve profit margins without resorting to layoffs or shorter shifts.

In the end, labor cost isn't just an expense to be trimmed; it's a reflection of how a shop operates. Getting visibility into where hours are spent can turn an unnoticed \$1,500 monthly labor leak into real dollars kept in the register. That's the kind of insight that doesn't just improve one month's results, but makes a business more stable and sustainable for the long term. ▶

deliveries — all while trying to keep up with demand. The result was a workforce stretched thin and a kitchen that felt perpetually busy but not necessarily more productive.

**"Slice has definitely made our life easier around here."**  
— Frank

The turning point came when the team began to reevaluate how they managed their daily operations. Rather than doubling down on traditional labor-intensive tasks, they invested in systems that streamlined their workflow and reduced interruptions. Encouraging customers to order online, simplifying their menu for consistency, and clarifying communication between front-of-house and kitchen helped smooth out bottlenecks that once ate up precious hours. As a result, staff could focus more on production quality and less on administrative friction — a change that translated into both improved efficiency and better morale.



Frank Morath, Mustachio's Pizzeria

Mustachio's experience echoes a broader trend among independent shops that are finding creative ways to thrive without sacrificing the craftsmanship their communities value. By scaling intelligently and leaning into digital tools that support — rather than replace — personal service, the pizzeria has managed to preserve its identity while strengthening its bottom line. For many small operators, this blend of tradition and innovation may offer a roadmap for sustainability in an increasingly competitive market. ▶



Photo by Slice

Think reliable.



Slice Register is the point of sale built for busy pizzerias.

[Slice.com/POS](https://Slice.com/POS)

## SMARTER, NOT HARDER: HOW MUSTACHIO'S SIMPLIFIED, NOT SACRIFICED

By **TERRENCE MORASH**

Frank Morath, GM of Mustachio's Pizzeria in Buffalo, NY, runs a busy shop where efficiency matters just as much as the food. As demand grew, and customers preferred ordering online versus using the phone, having reliable, easy-to-use systems in place became essential to keeping the shop running smoothly.

Frank and his team long feared that increasing labor and menu complexity were the only levers available to stay competitive. Like many small shops, they once leaned on manual processes for taking orders, juggling phone calls, and coordinating

# 6 WAYS TO BUILD A THRIVING PIZZERIA WITH NO EXPERIENCE



Eugene, Carina

By **BRUCE IRVING**

Eugene never worked in a restaurant when he decided to open a pizzeria. He baked sourdough out of his house, built a small following, and got some press from *Culture Map Dallas*. Then, one day he decided, "This is going to be my business." Today, Carina is a packed-out, Roman-style sourdough shop just outside Dallas. No investors. No culinary degree. No restaurant reputation. Just passion. Trial and error. Understanding his customer. And pride in the product.

Every pizzeria owner needs to hear Eugene's story, and use the lessons taught.

**YOU NEED AN OBSESSION, NOT A RESTAURANT BACKGROUND**

The owners who make it aren't always the most experienced. But they have the passion to believe in their product and know it can be so much more than what it is. Eugene worked in a restaurant for exactly six months, total. This wasn't to build a career, but to learn enough not to embarrass himself when he opened.

He then figured everything else out by going to the Pizza Expo twice, watching hours of videos, and blindly calling pizzeria owners to better understand what he didn't know. That's the secret. Not credentials. Just obsession. And action.

**KNOW YOUR CUSTOMER BEFORE YOU DESIGN YOUR MENU**

We see a lot of owners building the menu they want, then hoping customers show up. In reality, the shops that thrive do it the other way around. Eugene looked at the

neighborhood first. "Very plush, very fit." Detroit-style wasn't going to work. So he built around thin-crust Roman-style pizza, which barely anyone else in Dallas was doing.

Within just two weeks, he found out that he couldn't make a living on 10-inch personal pies. Customers kept asking for slices. So he added a grandma-meets-Detroit square, cut it into six, and offered it by the slice in three flavors only: margherita, vodka, and pepperoni.

Within a month, people were coming in just for the squares. Knowing your customer means both giving them what they want, and also staying close enough to adjust before it costs you.

**YOUR MENU IS NEVER FINISHED**

A menu needs to change. Evolve. Listening to customers through reviews, in-shop conversations, and on social media can help you understand the needs better, where you're falling short, and where you can change things. Remember, "You cannot sell the chef. You got to sell what they want, not what you want." It's about compromise. That's the job.

Slice's online ordering platform gives you visibility into exactly what's selling and what isn't, so your menu decisions are driven by data instead of instinct.

**SMALL FOOTPRINT, SMART OPERATIONS**

Carina's walk-in is a reach-in. There's no dishwasher. A sandwich prep station sat where a pizza prep table should be because it was 31 inches wide and fit the space. He's still able to push out 60 pizzas an hour, chasing profit over volume. A tight, manageable shop where quality doesn't slip is key.

# YOUR TURN

Constraints aren't a disadvantage. They force discipline. And discipline is what keeps quality consistent when it's busy. When you're running lean, every missed call or fumbled order costs you more than it would a bigger operation. A reliable phone ordering system that captures every order isn't optional for a shop like this.

**THE PIZZA COMMUNITY IS MORE GENEROUS THAN YOU THINK. USE IT**

If you have a question, reach out and ask someone. Slice has an active owner's community on Instagram and Facebook, where owners ask all sorts of questions, and get answers from other owners.

This is a strategy. There are owners out there who have already solved the problems you're about to face. From equipment and dough, to staffing and margins, most of them will tell you what they know if you ask a specific question.

And as you grow, your community will too. While maintaining the personal touch is ideal, enlisting help like Slice's marketing tools will handle some of the communication so you don't have to.

**"I'M NEVER HAPPY" IS A SUPERPOWER, NOT A PROBLEM**

When asked how long it took before he was happy with his product, Eugene told us, "I'm never happy."

This is almost his point of pride. Never being happy means always tweaking. Always watching what gets finished at the table versus what comes back. Always asking whether it's good enough to make someone reach for their phone.

Some advice for anyone looking to open a pizzeria: start with a perfect cheese pizza. Work on it endlessly. Get that right before you get creative.

Fundamentals first. Everything else after.

The moment you think you've figured it all out is usually the moment you stop getting better. ▶

## MY BETTER PIZZA PLAN

6 QUESTIONS TO GET YOU GOING

1

What do you still need to learn?

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.....  
.....

2

Who is your customer — really?

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3

What's your slowest menu item — and why?

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4

Where are orders slipping through the cracks?

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5

What is a question you would ask an owner you admire?

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.....

6

When did you last eat your own pizza like a customer?

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.....

# THE \$35,000 QUESTION FACING SHOP OWNERS

By WILL PRICE

## HIDDEN PROFIT IN PLAIN SIGHT

Independent pizzeria owners pulling in around \$1 million in annual sales might not realize it, but tens of thousands of dollars in profit are already sitting on the table — often in plain sight on their own websites. Many shops focus on walk-ins, phone calls and third-party delivery apps, unaware that the way they accept orders and where they direct customers can have a dramatic impact on their bottom line. The average monthly order volume for a shop of this size typically breaks down into roughly 70 percent by phone, about 20 percent online, and the remainder as walk-ins. Even when digital ordering accounts for a share of those orders, much of it comes through third-party marketplaces rather than a pizzeria's own direct channel, resulting in pizzerias losing up to roughly 30 percent of what an order could be worth in profit.

## WHY YOUR WEBSITE MATTERS

A crucial part of the story lies in how different ordering channels stack up. Online orders placed through a shop's own website tend to be significantly higher in value — at about \$42 per order on average — than orders taken by phone or at the register, which average closer to \$28. That difference of roughly \$14 per order adds up fast over the course of a year. For example, simply increasing a shop's online orders by 5 percent — without lowering prices, spending more on ads, or hiring extra staff — could generate roughly \$14,600 in annual revenue. On top of that, more efficient management of phone orders can, by some estimates, result in around 60 additional phone orders monthly, adding another \$20,000 or more to revenue each year.

For many pizzeria operators, the extra money isn't elusive — it's just

hidden behind friction in the ordering process. When customers can't easily find a direct online link, a website feels outdated, or phone lines go unanswered, shops lose valuable sales that would have come through with better digital integration. Encouraging customers to order directly through a shop's own system — whether via an updated website, optimized Google Business listing, or dedicated online menu page — not only increases order volume but also keeps more of the revenue with the shop instead of third-party platforms.

Simple math:

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{online} \rightarrow \\ \text{orders} \quad 348 \\ \times \$42 \\ \hline = \$14,616 \end{array}$$

## REAL REVENUE, REAL IMPACT

Putting those dollars into perspective, the roughly \$35,000 in added revenue from shifting more orders to direct online channels can be more than just theoretical. Many \$1 million-plus pizzerias operate on slim profit margins of around 15 percent. An extra \$35,000 in revenue could translate into roughly \$25,000 in additional profit after costs — money that can be used to pay owners more, hire help, upgrade equipment, or simply ease financial pressure. This additional income doesn't come from charging customers more or cutting corners; it comes from making it easier for customers to order directly, spend more per order and return more often.

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{phone} \rightarrow \\ \text{orders} \quad 720 \\ \times \$28 \\ \hline = \$20,160 \end{array}$$

## A SHIFT IN FOCUS FOR INDEPENDENT SHOPS

For operators who feel “busy but not profitable,” the shift toward direct online ordering may feel like a small change, but it can produce large results. By tightening operations, reducing reliance on third-party apps, and improving the customer's path to purchase, pizzerias can reclaim revenue that was previously lost to inefficiency. The math, in this case, tracks clearly: with simple improvements to the digital ordering experience and a focus on channels that retain more of each sale, tens of thousands of dollars each year doesn't have to be money left on the table. ▶

$$\begin{array}{r} \$14,616 \\ + \$20,160 \\ \hline = \$34,776 \end{array}$$

## A CONNECTICUT FAVORITE BUILT TO LAST

By TERENCE MORASH

BJ Nasufi didn't inherit Vinny's Restaurant & Pizzeria easily. His father and uncle opened the Agawam, Connecticut shop in 2001, building it from the ground up with long hours and a focus on serving their neighborhood well.

When BJ started working there, his dad made sure he came up the same way they had — learning under pressure and earning every skill step by step. There were no shortcuts. “Which gave me the skills,” BJ says simply. It's the kind of foundation that shapes not just a cook, but eventually an owner.

The shop's motto — from our family to yours — reflects the way the business operates. Vinny's is a pickup-and-delivery pizzeria focused on good food, good quality, and reasonable prices

for the community it serves. No frills, no pretense — just a neighborhood shop built on consistency and loyal customers.

When BJ began stepping into a leadership role, he saw opportunities to move the business forward. The previous generation preferred sticking with what had always worked, but BJ believed some changes could make life easier for both staff and customers. “My uncle and my dad, they liked to stick to their ways,” he says. “When I came in, I said: I'm going to do things different.” The goal wasn't to change Vinny's identity, but to modernize the way orders came in.



BJ Nasufi, Vinny's Restaurant & Pizzeria

The shift happened quickly once online ordering was introduced. “I kid you not, our first order was from Slice,” BJ recalls. “Put the website up, made a ticket, and that was it. Ever since then, like butter.” Orders grew, the phones stopped being a bottleneck, and the kitchen could focus on making food instead of juggling constant calls.

For BJ, the change was simple but meaningful. His family built something worth protecting — he just found a smarter way to carry it forward. Today, Vinny's uses Slice for its point of sale, online ordering, and pizza boxes, with customers placing orders directly through the shop's website at vinnysmenu.com.

For a shop that began as a traditional family operation, the transition shows how small adjustments can make a big difference. By keeping the same values while adopting tools that streamline the business, Vinny's has managed to stay rooted in its community while keeping pace with how customers order pizza today. ▶

SLICE'S SEVEN DAY FORECAST

MONDAY



Perfect day for pizza

TUESDAY



High likelihood of pizza

WEDNESDAY



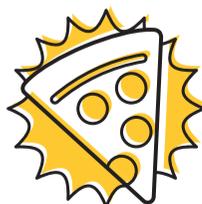
100% chance of pizza

THURSDAY



Ideal pizza climate

FRIDAY



Pizza will really hit the spot

SATURDAY



Expect a nice pizza/sky pairing

SUNDAY



Strong possibility of pizza

# DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOUR CUSTOMERS HATE THE MOST?

By WILL PRICE

Independent pizzeria owners know they didn't get into the pizza business to dissect complex marketing jargon or chase every possible data trend, but understanding how to talk to customers effectively remains essential.

At its core, good communication boils down to answering a few simple questions customers care about: Are you open? Is your pizza good? When will my order be ready? These basic touchpoints, when handled clearly and respectfully, build confidence; when overwhelmed with constant or irrelevant messages, customers quickly tune out and disengage.

**CUSTOMERS DON'T HATE YOU — THEY HATE ANNOYING MESSAGES.**

The average person already receives well over a hundred emails, texts and notifications each week, and pizzeria messages that blend into that noise can quickly turn from helpful reminders into unwanted interruptions.

Sending too many promotional offers or overly frequent notifications can make a shop feel like spam rather than a trusted favorite.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS MATTER MORE THAN PROMOTIONS

For customers trying a pizzeria for the first time, clear and reassuring communication is often a lot more valuable than flashy deals. Confirming an order, notifying them of delays and following up with a simple thank-you message goes a long way toward reducing anxiety and reinforcing confidence in the customer's experience.

**TOO MUCH MESSAGING DRIVES 75% OF YOUR CUSTOMERS AWAY WITHIN 90 DAYS.**

Too much messaging, even with good intentions, can harm retention; churn among new customers can spike when messages become intrusive. In contrast, regular patrons respond positively when they're recognized as individuals. Notifying a frequent

customer that their favorite pizza is back in stock or that a new menu item they're likely to enjoy has arrived can strengthen their loyalty and boost repeat orders.

**PERSONALIZED MESSAGES BOOST REPEAT ORDERS BY 20-30%. GENERIC MESSAGES GET IGNORED.**

Personalization here isn't just a nice touch — it helps customers feel seen rather than treated as just another name on a list.

## AUTOMATION SHOULD SUPPORT, NOT REPLACE, HOSPITALITY

Technology plays an important role in modern customer communication, but pizzeria owners need to shape it thoughtfully rather than letting automation take over. Simple automated messages that express appreciation or gently remind an infrequent customer that it's been a while since their last order can be valuable, while overly complex or frequent sequences create fatigue and diminish a brand's value.

Text messaging in particular demands careful use; if a restaurant wouldn't pick up the phone to share a piece of information, it probably shouldn't

go out via SMS. Unwanted texts not only annoy consumers but can also decrease the likelihood they'll order again. The goal isn't to automate personality out of the business, but to use tools in a way that enhances the human experience customers expect from a neighborhood pizzeria.

## PERSONALITY DRIVES LOYALTY

Social media adds another dimension to customer communication, but it is best seen as a way to express a pizzeria's personality rather than a direct sales channel. Sharing behind-the-scenes moments, showing the faces of the team and giving customers a sense of the shop's atmosphere can foster emotional connection far more effectively than constant promotional pushes. When followers feel connected to the brand story they're more likely to become loyal customers, not just passive observers. Messaging that respects customers' time and enhances their experience ultimately drives the only metric that matters in the long run: repeat business.

Return customers spend significantly more over time than first-timers, and focusing on meaningful, helpful communication increases the chance that customers will come back again and again, turning casual orders into lasting relationships. ▶

# DEBUNKING THE CHAIN PIZZA MYTH

By WILL PRICE

**DOMINO'S ISN'T NUMBER ONE BECAUSE OF THE PIZZA**

Independent pizzeria owners often wonder why the Domino's down the street consistently pulls in far more orders than the local shop, and the answer rarely comes down to sauce or crust. The average Domino's location does over \$1.5 million in annual sales, not because its pizza is inherently better, but because the chain has mastered the fundamentals of being easy to find and even easier to order from — long before a customer decides what toppings they want.

When a hungry diner pulls out their phone and searches for "pizza near me," most orders begin on Google, and Domino's shows up front and center because every single one of its locations has a complete, optimized online presence. Independent shops that don't manage their digital footprint — their Google Business Profile, website and online links

— miss out on those crucial first impressions that push customers into an ordering flow.

**ORDER EXPERIENCE DRIVES VOLUME AND VALUE**

Another key difference between national chains and local pizzerias lies in how customers place orders. Domino's deliberately makes its phone number hard to find, encouraging online interactions instead: roughly 80 percent of its orders come from digital channels, including search results, the Domino's app and online checkout processes.

That matters because orders placed online tend to be larger and more profitable; customers have the time to review options, customize their pies and add items to the cart — something they often skip when calling in. For independent shops, data shows that the majority of orders still come from phone calls. While phone orders can reinforce personal connection with regulars, they typically result in smaller tickets and require staff time that interrupts kitchen flow. Shops that make online ordering simpler — including having a direct website and clearly linked digital menus — give themselves a chance to grow average order size and reduce friction for new and casual customers.

**PRICING AND ONLINE VISIBILITY INFLUENCE DECISION MAKING**

How a pizzeria prices its online offerings can also affect customer behaviors. While rising costs across ingredients and labor pressure many owners to raise prices or tack on fees, every increase in the final cost can thin customer demand. Studies show that for every \$1 added to price, order volume can drop, making aggressive price increases a risky strategy in a competitive environment where chains often keep prices low to drive volume. By contrast, Domino's uses its scale to offer consistent pricing, clear promotions and an ordering experience that feels familiar across every market. Independent pizzerias can bridge that gap not by trying to match those prices but by ensuring they are visible where customers are searching, that their online ordering paths are seamless, and that they avoid unnecessary cost surprises that might push customers toward alternatives.

**SEEING — AND BEING SEEN — IS HALF THE BATTLE**

In the end, winning the pizza game doesn't require viral videos or complex

marketing funnels; it comes down to visibility and ease of ordering. The shops that succeed are the ones customers can find quickly online, link directly to for ordering, and trust to deliver a smooth experience every time.

Whether through regular updates to their online business listings, investing in an easy-to-use website, or pushing customers toward digital channels that enhance order size and profitability, independent pizzerias can compete with the ordering advantages of the big chains. ▶

# STATS

Online orders are 100% larger than phone orders.

**100%**

80% of orders for independent pizzerias come from phone, not online.

**80%**

# SCIULLI'S PIZZA: A FAMILY LEGACY



Photo by Slice

By **BRUCE IRVING**

The Sciulli family's pizza journey started in 1980 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, when brothers Antonio, Gabriel and Oriente Sciulli opened Sciulli's Pizza. Antonio's sons Eutimio (Timmy) and Luciano were just five years old when they started working at their family's pizza shop. Today, the sons continue to carry out the legacy.

In an interview with Timmy, he shares that his earliest memories revolve around pizza. He recalls how he and Luciano became the "cool kids" in school when they brought fresh pizza for their classmates. This was their first introduction to the joy that pizza can bring to a community.

Though growing up in the shop meant hard work and long hours, he credits those years with shaping who he is today. Working in the shop taught him more than just how to make good pizza — he learned how to manage money, interact with customers, and handle a business responsibly. What started as a family trade quickly became a calling. By the time Timmy earned his business degree, he already had the hands-on experience to run a successful shop.

The original Sciulli's was cash only. As the world started to innovate, so did the pizza industry. The older generation of Sciulli's were hesitant to adapt to technology. However, Timmy saw an opportunity he couldn't afford to miss. After much convincing, the older family members finally agreed to switch to Slice online ordering and payments — a move that made them competitive and ultimately quadrupled their sales.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, an entire new world of struggles hit the pizza industry. Their main customer base — college students and hospital workers — were unreachable. With all of the regulations, it was difficult to survive as a family-owned business.

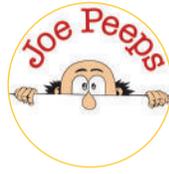


Photo by Slice

One day, in an effort to give back to the community, former Pittsburgh Steelers cornerback Joe Haden placed an \$8,000 online order through Slice to deliver pizzas to the local hospital. Due to the regulations, the hospital would not allow large, shareable pizzas to be delivered. Instead,

## OVERHEARD

Does it cost more to hire in-house drivers vs. using DoorDash or Uber Eats, etc?



"If the Uber drivers or DoorDash drivers do not bring in a hot bag. We do not give them the order. I'm paying them too much for them to mess up our orders."

—Marv Carde, Joe Peeps



"Third-party apps are a ripoff. With a 30% rate you can't make any money. I raised my prices 20%, and I eat 10% of it since delivery would cost me more anyway."

—Vito DeCandia, Angel City Pizza



"You can raise your regular prices and use marketing to give discounted prices for in-store pickups. Now your delivery costs are covered, and you're driving customers in because they believe they're getting a better deal."

—Pat Cleary, The Pizza Gene

JOIN IN AT [SLICE.COM/FORUM](https://slice.com/forum)

## OWNER ANONYMOUS

What did you take care of today that had nothing to do with pizza?

"It's my one day off and I always vow to give myself a day of rest BUT still researching new menu ideas, content and looking for new marketing strategies."

"Emails. The worst."

"Today I was the plumber, electrician, hvac, pay roll consultant, tech support on our website, social media manager, secretary, bookkeeper, board of trustees member for the chamber of commerce, oh and made pizza."

"My well being." 😂

"Emails, pop up schedule calls, Zoom meeting for a content collab & designing my online store, AND received our weekly supply order."

**HOUSE FAVORITES**  
Custom websites that get you found on Google, showcase your menu, and capture more direct orders. [Slice.com/Websites](https://slice.com/websites)

**Bella's Pizzeria**  
Pizzeria menu with various pizza options.

**Presto**  
Classic and bold, perfect for dine-in or delivery shops. \$0 WITH FAMILY MEMBERSHIP

**Rizzo's**  
Pizzeria menu with various pizza options.

**Famiglia**  
Highlight your local roots and community following. \$0 WITH FAMILY MEMBERSHIP

**Perfetto**  
Classic and bold, perfect for dine-in or delivery shops.

Sciulli's got creative and made 600 personal sized pies — a solution that would feed many hungry frontline workers. Sciulli's dedication to their community and mission to bring joy to others was clear during one of the darkest times in history.

Coming out of COVID made Sciulli's stronger and equipped to handle the constant challenges of operating a shop. Timmy says the hardest part of owning a pizzeria are the challenges outside of his control. Whether it's the rising costs of goods or learning how to match supply and demand, the brothers have learned to order in bulk and be strategic when working with vendors. He says the most important quality in building a resilient shop is having a "figure it out" mentality.

What is clear from speaking with Timmy is that the joys of owning a shop outweigh the struggles. The Sciulli brothers love to serve their community through the connection of food.



Photo by Slice

What it all comes down to is the people you care about the most, and how hard you will work to see them succeed. Timmy sat his family down after barely staying afloat during the pandemic and promised "this will never happen again." His final advice to shop owners: don't ever give up on your dreams and your business with the people you love. ▶

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# CAPTION CONTEST

Caption this! Scan the code, and sound off in the comments of our IG ([Instagram.com/Slice](https://www.instagram.com/slice)). Come up with a great one and we'll hook you up with a shirt of your choice from [Shop.Slice.com](http://Shop.Slice.com)!



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## Horoscopes

- AQUARIUS**  
Break the recipe. A creative operational tweak turns doubters into believers, even if the change feels unconventional at first.
- PISCES**  
Fold the numbers, not under pressure. Luck is circling your shop this week — make sure you're ready to capitalize on it.
- ARIES**  
Don't burn the crust chasing every new promotion. A bold idea will pay off — but only if you give it time to proof properly.
- TAURUS**  
Extra cheese isn't always the smart move. Hold firm on your food costs when a vendor tries to upsell you this week.
- GEMINI**  
Two specials, two opinions. Your team is split on direction — clarity in the kitchen meeting will keep the pie from wobbling.
- CANCER**  
Guard your oven heat and your culture. A staff member needs guidance, not another sharp critique during rush.
- LEO**  
You love a packed dining room. Just don't hog the spotlight — empowering a shift lead now earns longer loyalty later.
- VIRGO**  
Measure twice, order once. A small inventory adjustment this week prevents a much bigger headache next Friday night.
- LIBRA**  
Thin margins or thicker prices? You can't please every customer — price the pie for profit, not applause.
- SCORPIO**  
Keep your poker face like a sealed pizza box. Negotiations are heating up, and silence may be your strongest leverage.
- SAGITTARIUS**  
Test the topping you swore you'd never run. A limited-time special could spark buzz you didn't see coming.
- CAPRICORN**  
Slow fermentation beats quick fixes. The systems you're building now will carry you cleanly through the busy season.



## WOMEN IN PIZZA

Join a movement that empowers women in the pizza industry to share their stories, display their talents, inspire innovations, and connect with one another and the world.

[womeninpizza.com](http://womeninpizza.com)



## HELP WANTED

Care about independent pizzerias? Slice may have a job for you.

### Supplies Delivery Drivers

Love visiting pizzerias? Visit them all in a van stocked with the best pizza boxes around. [Slice.com/Careers](http://Slice.com/Careers)

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### Product Managers

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### Software Developers

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### Territory Managers

Meet pizzeria owners, talk about their challenges, and help come up with solutions. [Slice.com/Careers](http://Slice.com/Careers)

### Phone Operations Manager

Headset on, game face ready. Lead the team that answers the rush so owners can stay focused on the ovens. [Slice.com/Careers](http://Slice.com/Careers)

## SLICE OUT HUNGER

### WHAT WE DO

Slice Out Hunger stimulates local economies by sponsoring deliveries from independent pizzerias to hunger relief organizations in hundreds of communities across the US. By becoming a Pizza Partner, you get access to our turn-key programs that provide great marketing and community-building opportunities.



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Slice let us focus on making pizzas, and everything else was handled by Slice.

Jay, Tomato Joe's  
Tampa, FL



Running a pizzeria is nonstop. Anything that puts extra money back in your pocket without extra work is worth it.

Kemal, Tabor Pizzeria  
Morris Plains, NJ



We were already telling people about Slice, and now there's actually a payout attached to that.

Anthony, Nino's Pizza & Restaurant  
Hillsdale, NJ