



## Wisconsin Specialty Cheeses Create Signature-Style Pizzas

No other Italian dish has had such a lasting effect on America's menus as pizza. In fact, the average American consumes 46 slices of pizza each year. What began as a basic cheese dish has evolved into a sophisticated culinary creation featuring the latest in fresh, specialty ingredients. Toppings include everything from prosciutto and potatoes to asparagus and pesto, while cheese ranges from traditional Mozzarella, to more assertive, flavorful varieties.

With more than 600 varieties, types and styles, Wisconsin Cheese is the perfect ingredient for operators looking to update their pizza menus with premium quality additions and contemporary, new flavors.

### Cheese Makes the Pizza

While crust and toppings are important, cheese is often the shining star on a pizza, offering an appetizing golden-brown color, signature stretch and unbeatable flavor. When selecting pizza cheese, it is important for operators to pay attention to how it will perform.

Wisconsin Cheese is made with the highest standards for quality and with so many varieties to choose from, operators can easily customize their own specialty blend of Wisconsin cheeses with a little insight into the cheese performance and flavor characteristics.





**Melting & Browning**— Cheese varieties vary greatly in their performance under heat — some melt well, others retain their shape and still others are ideal for creating the golden-brown color of a perfect pizza topping. Keep the following rules in mind when creating a cheese blend to achieve an ideal balance of melt and color.

- **Whole milk cheeses** melt well, while **part-skim varieties** brown more and are easier to slice or shred.
- **Hard cheeses**, such as Parmesan or Romano, generally don't melt or flow well comparatively; however they do take on a golden brown color and combine easily with other cheeses.
- **Lower moisture cheeses** tend to brown faster than whole milk types and should be added later in the baking process to avoid a burnt flavor or appearance.
- Some varieties, such as **Blue cheese** and **Feta**, don't melt well, but retain their shape, adding bold flavor and interesting texture.

**Stretch**—Traditional pizza just wouldn't be the same without the amazing stretch and string of a cheesy topping. While the stretch of cheese adds important visual appeal, it also contributes a highly desirable mouthfeel. Generally, the harder the cheese, the less stretch. For optimal stretch, use cheeses from the Pasta Filata family such as Mozzarella or Provolone.

**Oiling Off**— A natural oil separation occurs when cheese melts. Keep in mind that ingredients such as pepperoni and sausage also release oil and compound the oiling from the cheese. Part-skim cheeses will have less oil separation.

**Flavor**— Consider issues such as whether the cheese flavor should be bold and assertive or mild and complementary.

## Wisconsin Specialty Cheese Keeps Pizza On-Trend

Flavors and styles of pizza are constantly evolving and growing to meet the ever-changing demands of today's consumers who crave much more than just the basic cheese and pepperoni pizza — they seek inventive combinations, bold flavors and interesting textures. Wisconsin specialty cheese plays a key role as an ingredient in many of today's top pizza trends:

- **Local and Artisan Toppings** — Operators anxious to update their pizza menus are moving away from mainstream ingredients in favor of a more local, artisan approach. Heirloom tomatoes, handmade sausages and small-batch Wisconsin cheeses satisfy consumers' appetite for fresh, homegrown foods.
- **Exploring Ethnicity**—Consumers have developed an appetite for ethnic foods that stretch the boundaries of popular Hispanic and Italian cuisines to include more exotic flavors. Special Wisconsin cheese blends can create contemporary international-style pizzas. Try adding shredded Wisconsin Queso Blanco con Frutas and Asadero cheeses to a Caribbean-inspired pizza featuring jerk-marinated chicken, pineapple and coconut. Or, for pizza with Greek flair, top the crust with shredded Wisconsin Kasserli and Feta cheeses, spinach, red onion and black olives.
- **Wood-Fired Pizzas**— The latest trend to hit the pizza scene has consumers clamoring for a perfectly charred, thin and crispy pizza crust topped with melted Wisconsin Cheese and a hint of smoky flavor that only a wood-fire oven can provide. Play up the flavor with a smoked Wisconsin Cheese such as Smoked Gouda or Mozzarella.

*For more information on how to create unique specialty pizzas with Wisconsin Cheese and for pizza recipes featuring Wisconsin Cheese, visit [www.foodservice.wisdairy.com](http://www.foodservice.wisdairy.com).*