

Marine Corps dining facilities feature pizza serving stations, such as this one at Camp Pendleton
(PHOTO COURTESY: CAMP PENDLETON)

Semper Pie

Marines are Always Faithful to Pizza on Dining Facility Menus

Pizza is one of many high-ranking cards that military food service can play to sway service members to choose dining facilities in favor of other daily mealtime options on, or off, the base.

In the campus-style layout of Marine Corps dining facilities, pizza is featured at a serving station because of its popularity, as well as a visual attraction.

"We asked the Marines their opinion about pizza, and heard their message loud and clear," said Patrick Grosso, food service director, Marine Corps Installations-West, MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif. "We now have college-campus-style serving stations coupled with display cooking and fire-burning pizza ovens."

Traditional contemporary pizza resembles the original that Grosso traces back to Naples, Italy. Genuine Neapolitan pizza, he said, still conforms to having a base no thicker than three millimeters, and the traditional toppings of tomato, garlic, olive oil, mozzarella and basil.

Here in America, however, the pizza has come a long way. "Americans love modifying food, and over the years pizza, in an endless number of varieties, has become an All-American food," Grosso said.

LABELING PIZZA

Marine Corps dining facilities are taking advantage of pizza's ability to be stretched and shaped into different varieties by creating options that comply with the Go for Green color-labeling healthy eating initiative.

"With so much attention on calorie content and a drive toward more healthy options," Grosso said,

"our pizza makers are addressing concerns about health and nutrition since there is a clear customer preference for thin crust and vegetarian pizzas."

Having so many pizza varieties results in an almost endless list of possible ingredients and promising recipes that fall into the healthy category. The Marine Corps' Fueled to Fight program is a simple system of product identification that enhances the Marine's ability to make healthy food choices.

Whether pizza is labeled Green, Yellow or Red, Grosso said, depends on the sum of its parts. "A vegetarian pizza will rank more favorably than the combination pepperoni and sausage," he said.

Being baked even gives pizza an advantage. "The method of baking is superior to frying when it comes to producing a more-healthy food," he said. "Frying foods in oil adds more calories because the oil attaches to the food. Since most oil is concentrated fat, it is therefore higher in calories, so baking is a more calorie-conscious choice."

Grosso resists limiting pizza's popularity to any single factor. "It's chewy, crispy, fresh-baked crust and zesty tomato sauce, and selection of savory toppings," he said.

If he had to boil pizza's popularity down to any one aspect, however, Grosso fell back on the simple, traditional, classic Neapolitan. "And, of course, the gooey, melted cheese," he said, asking: "Who doesn't like pizza?"

PIZZA IN AMERICA

Statistics in a recent study back up the Marine

FOOD FOCUS: PIZZA



Many different pizza varieties are possible with all the different ingredients and promising recipes.
(PHOTO COURTESY: CAMP PENDLETON)

Corps' passion for pizza, but also show it is a valuable source of nutrition in the daily American diet.

On any given day, pizza is consumed by 13 percent of the U.S. population aged 2 and older, according to "What We Eat in America," a National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) of U.S. children and adults from 2007 to 2010 that was published in February 2014 by the Food Surveys Research Group, Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Pizza consumption was highest among older children, 22 percent for ages 6 to 11 and 12 to 19. For ages 12 to 19 and 20 to 39, the range for military service, the percent of the U.S. population who consumed pizza on any given day was 26 percent of males and 18 percent of females in the 12- to 19-year-old age range, and 16 percent of males and 13 percent of females in the 20- to 39-year-old age range.

Pizza contributed as much as 6 percent of the

total energy for all children and 4 percent of the total energy for all adults in the U.S. population. For 12- to 19-year-olds, the percent of daily energy intake contributed by pizza was 28 percent for males and 25 percent for females, and among 20- to 39-year-olds was 30 percent for males and 26 percent for females.

The amount of energy contained in a slice of cheese pizza ranged from 220 to 370 kilocalories.

Pizza contributed substantially to total nutrient intake among consumers. Relative to energy contribution, pizza provided higher percentages of the day's total intake for protein, total fat, saturated fat, fiber, calcium and lycopene among children and adult consumers of pizza.

Pizza contributed 33 percent and 38 percent of the daily intake for sodium among children and adult consumers, respectively. The mean sodium intake obtained from pizza was 1,136 mg for children and 1,599 mg for adults.

—GFS