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Pizza -everyone loves it!

Brenda McDonnell, owner of Brenda's Pizzeria, serves up some of the tastiest (and biggest) hand-tossed pizza in Western Maryland. All ingredients are freshly prepared to order on the premises.

Americans love to eat pizza. Once considered to be peasant's meal not suitable for consumption by blue-blooded European nobles, pizza has become a most popular American food. In fact, Americans eat more pizza than anyone else in history. One estimate of American consumption is 90 acres per day or 23 pounds per person per year. From Italian neighborhoods before World War II, to the mainstream restaurants following that conflict, pizza rules as the top food choice among American kids and is a favorite of all age groups. American pizza marks its 100th birthday in 2005, so break out noisemakers and let the fun begin.

The origins of pizza cannot be attributed to one "inventor" but are credited to many sources. It seems that foods resembling today's pizza were eaten by the Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians who prepared different flat breads as staples in their diets. One popular story has Roman troops eating black crusts of bread that were burnt by their hearth fires. The blackening process, or *picea*, may be the origin of the modern day term. Other sources disagree, pointing to a later origin of the word, a bird with spotchily colored feathers that had a habit of gathering odds and ends of food in much the same way pizza is prepared using a wide variety of ingredients. The Latin term for the bird was *Pica*.

Despite the word's obscure origins, pizza became an identifiable food item in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Naples is generally given credit for the first pizza pie as we know it today. Poor housewives used flour, lard, olive oil, cheese, and herbs to feed their families. Because peasants diets were strictly determined by readily available food sources, the making of pizza became widespread among the lower classes of the region. An important and inexpensive ingredient was added to pizza during the Columbian exchange—tomatoes. Many Europeans feared eating tomatoes but the Neapolitans were more accepting, incorporating the easily grown food into their diets. With the addition of tomatoes, pizza became a clearly defined menu item.

The world's first pizzeria is the Neapolitan *Antica Pizzeria Port Aba* that opened in 1830 and remains in business today. Its pizza is still prepared the same way it was in the nineteenth century using hand kneaded dough, tomatoes grown in Vesuvius's volcanic ash, mozzarella cheese, fresh ingredients placed on a marble counter for customer's topping selection, and a brick oven for baking.

Neapolitan pizzerias may choose to belong to a governing body called *The Association of True Pizza* which maintains

strict standards for members to uphold. All dough must be made from flour, natural yeast or brewer's yeast, salt, and water. Dough must be kneaded by hand or in low temperature mixers. After the mixing process, the dough must be shaped by hand. Only wood-burning brick ovens are permitted in the members' pizzerias.

Pizza remained a European food item until Italian immigration to America increased dramatically in the late 1800's. It was an Italian, Gennaro Lombardi, who opened America's first pizza shop in 1905, at 53½ Spring Street, in New York City. Lombardi emigrated from Naples in the late nineteenth century and settled in New York to become a baker. Only meager earnings resulted from his traditional baking trade so he moonlighted by baking pizzas at night. The pizzas were sold by the slice to local workers the following day. When Lombardi acquired the bakery from his employer, he decided to add a pizzeria. His market continued to be factory laborers who purchased hundreds of pieces each day, making Lombardi's Neapolitan-style pizza a neighborhood landmark. Soon, other entrepreneurs offered the item in Italian neighborhoods around New York City.

Lombardi's pizza differed from the Old World style in only one important way—he used a coal-fired oven instead of the wood-fired model that prevails in Italy. Lombardi's is still open for business and uses the original coal-fired oven. Only two such ovens exist in the United States.

While New York City proudly claims the first American pizzeria, Chicago can lay claim to the first successful Americanized adaptation of the traditional Italian dish. Chicago resident, Ric Ricardo, was intrigued with the possibilities of offering pizza to American customers, yet he believed it would not be favored by mid-westerners who ate hearty meals. After experimentation with creating a more substantial pizza, Ricardo and his partner, Ike Sewell, opened Uno's Pizzeria in 1941. This "Chicago-style" pizza offered customers a thick crust, commonly called deep-dish pizza. This Americanized version marked a change from the traditional Neapolitan style and was tremendously successful in the Windy City.

Italian restaurants across the country offered pizza but it wasn't widely accepted by most Americans until GI's returned from the Italian campaign of World War II. The GI's raved about the dish and sought places that sold it. Pizza ceased to be an ethnic food, moving out of old neighborhoods and into the suburbs.

Pizza was considered by many Americans to be a snack food and not a proper meal, but its popularity continued to grow no matter what it was called. Pizza was aptly suited to America because it was affordable, offered choices to suit individual tastes, and was fast to prepare. Factory workers and white collar workers increasingly viewed it as lunch and pizzerias accommodated them by selling slices. As pizza became mainstream and Americanized, entrepreneurs rose to the occasion.

Brothers Frank and Dean Carney capitalized on the growing pizza market in 1958 by opening a pizzeria in Wichita, Kansas. No one could anticipate that the Carney's concept of consistency, fast production, and clever marketing would take pizza to mainstream America. Their Pizza Hut restaurant transformed pizza from a slow, traditional process to a faster production line item while maintaining consistently high standards for quality. The franchise pizza operation was underway.

As pizza became more popular, it became inevitable that it would become part of the TV generation; the first frozen pizza became available in the 1950's.

If franchising operations and frozen pizzas were available to consumers, how long would it take before pizza would be an "on demand" item? That innovation could be credited to two Ypsilanti, Michigan brothers, Tom and Nick Monaghan, who opened DomiNick's Pizzeria. Tom traded his Volkswagen to Nick for his share of the business. Tom renamed the store Domino's and his promise of pizza in minutes completed the mass marketing of the popular food item. From ethnic neighborhoods to nationwide mass marketing, pizza has become an American food favorite.

Deep Creek Lake has its share of fine pizzerias, including Brenda's Pizzeria at 21311 Garrett Highway, located ½ mile south of the 219 Bridge. A native of the Bronx, New York, Brenda McDonnell favors New York style pizza, using only the finest imported and domestic ingredients. Brenda states, "We make our dough and sauces daily to maintain consistently high standards in preparing featured menu items."

A Garrett County pizza making pioneer, Brenda noticed upon arrival in Garrett County, that the only "scratch made" pizza was located many miles away from Deep Creek Lake. Beginning with Dominick's Pizzeria in McHenry almost two decades ago, Brenda developed a passion for the restaurant business and quality pizza making in particular. "I love my job, I love my customers, and I love my staff," summarizes Brenda. Customers benefit from Brenda's energy and enthusiasm as they may watch their orders being prepared in the quality, Old World style.

Old World pizza perfectly embraced America's personality because it could be made in many sizes, shapes, and varieties. It is also typically American in that it was derived from the old world and adapted to the new one with astonishing success. From ethnic neighborhood food to most popular food, pizza reigns supreme. Thank you, Gennaro Lombardi!

Other locations for good hand tossed pizza at Deep Creek Lake:

Pizzazz Pizzeria, a **Wisp** tradition, serves hand tossed pizzas by the pie or by the slice. Fast and fresh to refuel you before you tackle the slopes!

The Original **Uno Restaurant** for true Chicago pizza. 