

6th Century B.C.

At the height of the Persian Empire, it is said that the soldiers of Darius the Great (521-486 B.C.), accustomed to lengthy marches, baked a kind of bread flat upon their shields and then covered it with cheese and dates.

3rd Century B.C.

Marcus Porcius Cato (234-149 B.C.), also known as Cato the Elder, wrote the first history of Rome. He wrote about "**flat round of dough dressed with olive oil, herbs, and honey baked on stones.**"

1st Century B.C.

In "The Aeneid" written by Virgil (70-19 B.C.), it describes the legendary origin of the Roman nation, describing cakes or circles of bread:

"Beneath a shady tree, the hero spread his table on the turf, with cakes of bread; And, with his chiefs, on forest fruits he fed. They sate; and (not without the god's command). Their homely fare dispatched, the hungry band invade their trenchers next, and soon devour to mend the scanty meal, their cakes of flour...See, we devour the plates on which we fed."

1st Century A.D.

Our knowledge of Roman cookery derives mainly from the excavations at Pompeii and from the great cookery book of Marcus Gavius Apicius called "De Re Coquinaria." Apicius was a culinary expert and from his writings, he provided us with information on ancient Roman cuisine. It is recorded that so great was Apicius' love of food that he poisoned himself for fear of dying of hunger when his finances fell into disarray. Apicius' book also contains recipes which involve putting a variety of ingredients on a base of bread (a hollowed-out loaf). The recipe uses chicken meat, pine kernels, cheese, garlic, mint, pepper, and oil (all ingredients of the contemporary pizza). The recipe concludes the instruction "*insuper nive, et inferes*" which means "*cool in snow and serve!*"

79 A.D. - In the ashes after Mount Vesuvius erupted and smothered Pompeii on August 24, 79 A.D., evidence was found of a flat flour cake that was baked and widely eaten at that time in Pompeii and nearby Neapolis, The Greek colony that became Naples. Evidence was also found in Pompeii of shops, complete with marble slabs and other tools of the trade, which resemble the conventional pizzeria. The Museo Nazionale at Naples exhibits a statue from Pompeii which because of its stance is called I pizzaiolo.

16th Century

1522 - Tomatoes were brought back to Europe from the New World (Peru). Originally they were thought to be poisonous, but later the poorer people of Naples added the new tomatoes to their yeast dough and created the first simple pizza, as we know it. They usually had only flour, olive oil, lard, cheese, and herbs with which to feed their families. All of Italy proclaimed the Neapolitan pies to be the best. At that time, the Tavern of the Cerrigloi was a hangout for the Spanish soldiers of the Viceroy. It is said that they flocked there to feast on the specialty of the house - pizza.

17th Century

By the 17th Century, pizza had achieved a local popularity among visitors to Naples who would venture into the poorer sections to taste this peasant dish made by men called "pizzaioli."

18th Century

Queen Maria Carolina d'Asburgo Lorena (1752-1814), wife of the King of Naples, Ferdinando IV (1751-1821), had a special oven built in their summer palace of Capodimonte so that their chef could serve pizzas to herself and to her guests.

19th Century

1889 - Umberto I (1844-1900), King of Italy, and his wife, Queen Margherita di Savoia (1851-1926), in Naples on holiday, called to their palace the most popular of the pizzaioli (pizza chef), Raffaele Esposito, to taste his specialties. He prepared three kinds of pizzas: one with pork fat, cheese, and basil; one with garlic, oil, and tomatoes; and another with mozzarella, basil, and tomatoes (in the colors of the Italian flag). The Queen liked the last kind of pizza so much that she sent to the pizzaiolo a letter to thank him saying, "***I assure you that the three kinds of pizza you have prepared were very delicious.***" Raffaele Esposito dedicated his specialty to the Queen and called it "Pizza Margherita." This pizza set the standard by which today's pizza evolved as well as firmly established Naples as the pizza capitol of the world.

In the late 19th century, pizza was sold in the streets in Naples at breakfast, lunch, and dinner. It was cut from a large tray that had been cooked in the baker's oven and had a simple topping of mushrooms and anchovies. As pizza became more popular, stalls were set up where the dough was shaped as customers ordered. Various toppings were invented. The stalls soon developed into the pizzeria, an open-air place for people to congregate, eat, drink, and talk.

Pizza migrated to America with the Italians in the latter half of the 19th century. Pizza was introduced to Chicago by a peddler who walked up and down Taylor Street with a metal washtub of pizzas on his head, crying his wares at two cents a chew. This was the traditional way pizza used to be sold in Naples, in copper cylindrical

drums with false bottoms that were packed with charcoal from the oven to keep the pizzas hot. The name of the pizzeria was embossed on the drum.

20th Century

NOTE: For many people, especially among the Italian-American population, the first American pizzas were known as Tomato Pie. Even in the present 21st century, present-day tomato pie is most commonly found in the Northeastern United States, especially in Italian bakeries in central New York. Tomato pies are built the opposite of pizza pies - first the cheese, then the toppings, and then the sauce.

1905 - Gennaro Lombardi claims to have opened the first United States Pizzeria in New York City at 53 1/2 Spring Street. Lombardo is now known as America's "Patriaca dela Pizza." It wasn't until the early 1930s that he added tables and chairs and sold spaghetti as well.

1943 - Chicago-style deep-dish pizza (a pizza with a flaky crust that rises an inch or more above the plate and surrounds deep piles of toppings) was created by Ike Sewell at his bar and grill called Pizzeria Uno.

1945 - With the stationing of American soldiers in Italy during World War II (1941-1945) came a growing appreciation of pizza. When the soldiers returned from war, they brought with them a taste for pizza.

1948 - The first commercial pizza-pie mix, "Roman Pizza Mix," was produced in Worcester, Massachusetts by Frank A. Fiorello.

1950s - It wasn't until the 1950s that Americans really started noticing pizza. Celebrities of Italian origin, such as Jerry Colonna, Frank Sinatra, Jimmy Durante, and baseball star Joe DiMaggio all devoured pizzas. It is also said that the line from the song by famous singer, Dean Martin; ***"When the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie, that amore"*** set America singing and eating pizzas.

1957 - Frozen pizzas were introduced and found in local grocery stores. The first was marketed by the Celentano Brothers. Pizza soon became the most popular of all frozen food.