

PIZZA *facts & fancies*

Foodies Flock To Old World Pepperonism And Spark Heated Pepperoni Pizza Debate

(NAPS)—Pepperoni is America's most popular pizza topping, with 53 percent listing it as one of their top 3 favorites, according to a YouGov survey.

Most Americans know only one kind of pepperoni: flat and quite chewy. Now, there's fandom brewing for a different style of pepperoni with its crispy, bold-flavored cups known as Old World Pepperoni.

Various outlets, both new and traditional, have picked up on this trend. From the Wall Street Journal to the online publication, Kitchen Rally, pizza lovers have begun to further explore the differences between the two pepperoni styles while asking which slice is superior.

While the sight of curling, crispy pepperoni cups has long been easy to see in places such as Buffalo and across Ohio, the rise of foodie influencers put Old World Pepperoni on the map nationwide. On Instagram, the hashtag '#ron-icups' returns more than 6,000 posts with thousands of likes. Users are drawn to the aesthetic of curled up, bright red and glistening pepperoni slices.

Pizza makers are taking notice of this trend.

Darren Gray, senior director of menu and culinary innovation for Marco's Pizza, estimates the brand will place 231 million slices of Old World Pepperoni on its pizza in 2019.

Marco's Pizza, named Most Loved Pizza Brand according to the 2019 Harris Poll EquiTrend Study, has offered both styles of pepperoni for the better part of a decade. Gray noted that the restaurant's Pepperoni Magnifico pizza, features both types of pepperoni and is among the most popular items on the menu.

"It's a pepperoni lover's dream—those crispy cups give you a completely different texture," Gray said. "It's meat candy."

Gray describes the key differences between the two styles this way: traditional lay-flat pepperoni sausages come in an artificial casing. This is less expensive than natural casing, which helps explain why it's long been more prevalent in pizzerias across the country. Old



The crispy, curling cups of genuine Old World Pepperoni adds a nice spicy touch to pizza.

World Pepperoni comes in a natural casing; when that casing cooks down in the oven, it causes the slices to cup up and crisp along the edges, providing a far crispier texture and a bolder flavor.

Gray noticed an increase over the past couple years in how often Marco's customers add Old World Pepperoni to their orders. He likens the trend to the growing popularity of another pork offering.

"Americans are developing more of a palate for bolder flavors, just look at the rise of popularity in applewood-smoked bacon," Gray said. "Old World Pepperoni is the closest you'll come to bacon in a cured Italian meat."

Gray believes the movement in favor of bolder flavors is more than just a fad. Instead, he views this as a sign of Americans developing a more mature and curious palate. Gray notes Marco's Pizza is benefiting from a growing desire to move away from processed foods since each of the brand's restaurants makes its dough from scratch daily, uses freshly cut produce and mixes herbs and spices into the sauce in-store every day.

"The trend toward spicier products and flavors continues to be on the rise—spicy garlic as an example," he said. "Old World Pepperoni is not necessarily hot but there is a kick and it definitely has a bolder flavor."

To try Old World Pepperoni for yourself, go to marcos.com or download the app.