

2005 Consumers' Choice in Chains

2005 Consumers' Choice in Chains: Pizza Papa Murphy's Take 'N' Bake Pizza

Acceptance of the status quo is unheard of at Papa Murphy's Take 'N' Bake Pizza.



"Fresh" is the driving force for this three-time Consumers' Choice in Chains winner. Boasting vegetables that come from markets rather than freezers or cans, dough made daily and cheese shredded in-house, Papa Murphy's attributes its success to the simple art of listening.

"Every decision we make is based on guest satisfaction," says President Mark Laramie. "We all have opinions here, but it's the customer's opinion we act upon."



Keeping to that strategy, Papa Murphy's has rolled out a new front-of-the-house image and décor. Consumer feedback indicated that while the food earned rave reviews, the stores needed some refreshing. In response, the chain provided the capital to update existing locations and will build all future units using the new design. With warmer colors, a reconfigured prep area that lets customers see their pizzas assembled, and sampling ovens that provide tastes of its finished-at-home product, the design yields the sought-after improvements, Laramie says.

"Customers get a sense of the aroma and ambience that comes with a pizza store," he says. "We were missing that and it was leading to a sterile aspect."

New units provide other improvements such as grab-and-go deli cases near the register that are stocked with salads and ready-to-bake cookie dough.

"New products are key to customers being happy and coming back more often," Laramie says. "With the grab-and-go cases there is no heavy-handed suggestive sell."

Customers Vs. Paperwork

One product line customers can't seem to get enough of is Thin Crust deLITE pizza. With half the carbs and calories of Papa Murphy's regular pizza, deLITE was the chain's first diet-friendly offering. And while other lower-carb foods have fallen out of favor, the deLITE was so well received that it became a regular item.

Product additions and fresh coats of paint aren't the only enhancements Papa Murphy's is making. By 2007, all units will have upgraded point-of-sale systems that speed transactions and allow the chain to customize discounts and offers to match individual guest's taste preferences and buying patterns.

"Consumers have a million things on their minds and don't have the time to be aware of every deal out there," Laramie says. "This service will keep them updated on personalized specials—and also make them feel special."

The return on the investment in POS technology is expected to come in the form of increased satisfaction for both customers and operators.

Headquarters	Vancouver, Wash.
CEO	John Barr
Units	850
Check average	NA
Respondents aware of chain	22%
Respondents who visited in previous 12 months	7%
Percent of customers who plan to go back to Papa Murphy's	92%
Age group with highest return intent: Gen X (ages 29 to 40)	96%
Attribute with highest mean score (scale of 1 to 5): Value	4.18
Key region	West

"The new POS offers efficiencies and cost savings by providing a sophisticated system that's easy to operate," Laramie says. "It also allows us to focus on the customer and less on back-office paperwork."

System growth will be a key initiative in coming months, and Papa Murphy's intends to maintain a steady pace. The primary goal, however, is to uphold quality standards rather than to meet any predetermined number of openings.

"Sometimes the toughest and smartest decisions are the ones when you say no," Laramie says.

Gold Winner

Adding new specialty pizzas to its 16-variety pizza buffet is important to CiCi's Pizza but not nearly as important as improving the foundation on which it builds those pizzas.

During the past 12 months, the Coppell, Texas-based chain reformulated its pizza dough, making the project its biggest initiative of the year.



"Our customers were telling us the pizza was great but that the dough was terrible," says CiCi's President Craig Moore. "Once we introduced the new dough, we started getting positive comments immediately."

Attention to detail is a key factor in CiCi's success. The chain opts to improve customer-proven

products rather than constantly introduce new ones.

"We think it's important to be great at what you do," Moore says. "We want to build our concept on the idea that our customers know what they will get every time they visit us."

Crystal Winner

To mark the July opening of its 3,000th store, Papa John's announced that the New York City location's first-day guests would receive the chain's "secret ingredient." A vine-ripened tomato accompanied each pizza ordered.

"Better ingredients. Better pizza" long has been the chain's advertising promise, and it makes good with freshly made dough and cheese shredded in-house. The Louisville, Ky.-based concept understands that dedication to food quality is central to its success.



Papa John's also believes customers want variety and new flavors and has responded with a string of new products, including nonpizza offerings such as Papa's Wings chicken wings in spicy Buffalo and mild chipotle barbecue flavors. Recent limited-time pizza additions have included Spicy Meatball, Sicilian Meats, Barbeque Chicken and Bacon, and Hawaiian Barbeque Chicken.

Chain	Overall Score	Food Quality	Menu Variety	Value	Good Reputation	Service	Atmosphere	Cleanliness	Convenience
1. Papa Murphy's Take 'N' Bake Pizza	71.2%	80%	63%	80%	73%	69%	40%	67%	68%
2. CiCi's Pizza	56.9	54	52	73	55	56	43	49	59
3. Papa John's	52	66	44	47	63	51	30	45	52
4. Round Table Pizza	49.7	68	54	34	65	46	40	43	46
5. Pizza Hut	48.3	60	49	42	59	45	36	41	49
6. Little Caesars	43.3	43	30	62	42	40	26	31	50
7. Domino's Pizza	42.7	46	37	45	49	41	23	34	53
8. Chuck E. Cheese's	39.1	36	30	32	54	42	67	46	37

Note: Overall Score is an index; percentages represent respondents who rated the chain "above average" on the given attribute.