

5 Reasons to Choose Cheese-less Pizza

Europeans have long known the wonders of cheese-free pizza made with fresh and flavorful ingredients. Yet, in the United States, deep dish pizzas loaded with piles of stringy cheese are more than the norm, they are practically the rule in many pizza parlors. Nonetheless, as awareness of food allergies, intolerances, and health benefits emerge … and the rising cost of food nips at household budgets … the potential of cheese-less pizza is finally getting the attention it deserves. But just in case you haven't yet come over to the healthier side of pizza, or you would just like some more reasons and recipes to enjoy it, here is some cheese-free ammunition that you may find handy …

Lower fat and calories ~ You are going to add those other toppings regardless, so unloading that layer of cheese will slice the fat and calories of your pie dramatically without sacrificing flavor (read reason #5). Mozzarella is one of the slimmer cheeses, yet it still packs on another 5-6 grams of fat and 80 calories per ounce … and lets face it, who eats just one ounce of cheese while helping themselves to pizza?

Way less expensive ~ If you live in Europe, this cheesy commodity has soared 50% in the past year alone! We certainly haven't been spared inflation in the U.S. either. Not to mention, shouldn't you only be buying organic cheese due to the use of hormones and antibiotics in the dairy industry? Lets just double that price then, shall we?

No tiresome grating required ~ I may be the only one out there with pre-spinach Popeye arms, but grating cheese always rated as one of my least favorite kitchen duties. Though I don't think the substitute is necessary, I loved the easy grating of cheese substitutes such as Vegan Gourmet.

Even your lactose intolerant and vegan friends can partake ~ I love being able to present food to friends and family that meets everyone's special diet needs. Mom is following a low fat diet … cheese-less pizza. Dad has lactose intolerance … cheese-less pizza. A friend has multiple food allergies … cheese-less pizza. Feel like enjoying a light but fulfilling vegan meal … cheese-less pizza. Really, it is practically a one meal fits all. You can even buy a quick and easy baking mix to accommodate gluten-free / casein-free loved ones with a gluten-free crust.

You can actually taste the toppings ~ Last, but not least, my taste buds opened up to a whole new range of flavor options when I removed the cheese. Sure, I could order a pesto or Thai-style pizza before, but lets face it, the cheese was still the predominant taste. Now we are able to use the pizza dough as our canvas to create flavorful masterpieces. Some of my personal favorites are the simplest:

- Garlic, sun-dried tomatoes, olive oil, and high quality olives
- Butcher fresh Italian sausage and mushroom with a fresh tomato sauce and generous shake of oregano
- Homemade garlic white sauce with caramelized onions, fresh tomato slices, and a light sprinkling of crushed red pepper

Need some more inspiration? Try one of these great cheese-less pizzas:

- Mushroom & Artichoke Hearts (vegan)
 - Onions & Sardines
 - Sort of Puttanesca
 - Pizza Cookie (vegan optional)
 - Tomato Pesto (vegan)
 - Piled High Vegetable Pie (vegan)
 - Thai Chick-un Pizza (vegan)
 - Oven Roasted Garlic and Red Pepper Pizza Sauce (vegan)
 - Shortcut ~ Amy's No Cheese Pizza (available in the freezer section of most grocers)
- Article by Alisa Fleming, Founder and Editor of www.GoDairyFree.org. Feel free to email the author with questions and comments.