

5 The Birth of Pizza



Pizza, that beloved round of cheesy delight, has a rich and interesting backstory. Its journey begins in the bustling streets of Naples, Italy, where flavors melded, dough sizzled, and toppings danced to create a culinary masterpiece. So, grab your imaginary passport, young reader, and let's embark on a tasty adventure! Our pizza tale doesn't start with a pizzeria sign but with ancient flatbreads. Picture this: Persian soldiers, shields in hand, baking flatbreads topped with cheese and dates. Fast-forward to Ancient Greece, where citizens relished "plakous" – a flatbread adorned with herbs, onion, cheese, and garlic. Even the legendary Aeneas, in Virgil's epic poem, encountered round cakes resembling pita bread, which turned out to be the prophesied "tables." These early people laid the doughy groundwork for what we now call pizza.

The real magic happened in Naples during the 16th to mid-18th centuries. Imagine narrow cobblestone streets, bustling markets, and the scent of wood-fired ovens. Here, inventive bakers transformed flatbreads into something extraordinary. They added tomatoes (a novelty back then), olive oil, garlic, and a sprinkle of local cheese. Voilà! The first pizzas emerged, and Neapolitans rejoiced.

Now, let's meet Raffaele Esposito, a skilled pizzaiolo (that's Italian for pizza maker). In 1889, King Umberto I and Queen Margherita visited Naples. Esposito, eager to impress, crafted three pizzas. The standout? A patriotic masterpiece: tomato, mozzarella, and basil – the colors of the Italian flag. Queen Margherita loved it, and thus, the Margherita pizza was born. Imagine the queen taking a bite, her crown slightly askew, and declaring, "Delizioso!"

Pizza's fame spread like melted cheese. Italian immigrants carried it across oceans, introducing New Yorkers, Chicagoans, and Californians to its cheesy charms. World War II played a role too – American soldiers stationed in Italy discovered pizza and brought their newfound love home. Suddenly, pizza wasn't just an Italian secret; it was everyone's favorite slice.

And there you have it, young pizza enthusiasts! From ancient flatbreads to Queen Margherita's approval, pizza's journey is as flavorful as its toppings. Next time you savor that gooey slice, remember the streets of Naples, the pizzaiolos' artistry, and the joy shared across continents. Buon appetito!

Sources:

History of pizza - Wikipedia

Who Invented Pizza: Is Italy Truly the Birthplace of Pizza? historycooperative.org

1. *Read the reading passage thoroughly.*
2. *Underline any word or sentence you don't understand.*

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Answer according to the reading passage:

- 1. Where is the birth place of pizza?**
 - a. Rome
 - b. Naples
 - c. Greece

- 2. Which ingredients were NOT part of the early flatbreads that led to pizza?**
 - a. cheese
 - b. dates
 - c. tomatoes

- 3. What does 'pizzaiolo' mean?**
 - a. pizza lover
 - b. pizza critic
 - c. pizza maker

- 4. How did Pizza get introduced to the United States?**
 - a. Rome immigrants
 - b. Greece immigrants
 - c. Italian immigrants

- 5. What inspired the colors of a Margherita pizza:**
 - a. the Roman flag
 - b. the Italian flag
 - c. the American flag

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Open Response Questions

Open response questions for thinking skills:

1. Inferring
2. Making Connections
3. Summarizing
4. Visualizing

1. Why do you think pizza became so popular among Italian immigrants in the United States?
 2. Imagine you're writing a letter to Raffaele Esposito, thanking him for inventing the Margherita pizza. What would you say in your letter?
 3. What 3 things did you learn from this reading passage?
 4. Describe how pizza tastes to you.
- Write about your favorite pizza memory – whether it's a family gathering, a late-night slice, or a quirky pizza-related adventure!
 - Could this passage be fiction or non fiction? Explain.
 - Do you think pizza will continue to evolve in the future? What wild pizza toppings or innovations might we see in the next century?
 - If you could invent a new pizza topping combination, what would it be? Explain why your creation would be a hit.