

eNutrition News

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A guide to buying frozen pizza

If you've ever scanned the frozen food aisle for a quick and easy family dinner, chances are you've brought home a frozen pizza or two. With toppings like chicken and Brie, roasted vegetables and feta, or barbecued chicken, frozen pizzas have gotten better tasting.

But are they good for you? Well, we decided to head to the grocery stores and find out. We rated over 130 brands of frozen pizza so we could tell which ones to add to your grocery cart and which ones to pass up. It turns out that finding a good tasting frozen pizza that isn't loaded with saturated fat (the type that raises LDL blood cholesterol) and sodium has gotten easier since our last review in 2006.

I'm not saying that frozen pizza is a health food but it isn't really a junk food either. A serving of frozen pizza has considerably less calories, fat and sodium than a burger and fries. And pizza delivers other nutritional benefits too – you get calcium from the cheese and lycopene (an antioxidant linked to a lower risk of prostate cancer) and vitamins A and C from the tomato sauce. And if you choose your crust and toppings wisely, you'll add some fibre to your meal.

The key to making a nutritious choice is reading labels. The following guidelines will help you choose a frozen pizza that won't wreak havoc on your waistline or your arteries.

Check serving size. Nutrient numbers such as calories, grams of fat, milligrams of sodium and so on are based on *one serving* of frozen pizza, a portion that varies from brand to brand. With the exception of personal-size pizzas (which we didn't rate), one serving is not the entire pizza. A serving is usually considered 1/8 to 1/2 of the pizza depending on its size and number of hefty toppings.

Check the serving size carefully before you decide how much to eat. Pizzas with a thick or rising crust and/or more meat or cheese toppings usually have a smaller serving size. For instance, one serving (1/6 of the pizza) of President's Choice Chicago Style Deep Dish Sausage and Pepperoni has 380 calories, 19 grams of fat (7 of them saturated) and 850 milligrams of sodium. But most people don't stop after eating one-sixth of a pizza. If you eat half of this pizza you'll consume 1140 calories, 57 grams of fat and 2550 milligrams of sodium. Even a McDonald's Quarter Pounder with a large order of fries has less (990 calories, 48 grams fat, 1080 milligrams sodium)!

Look out for saturated fat and sodium. Look for no more than 4 grams of saturated fat and 600 milligrams of sodium per serving. These numbers translate into 20% of a day's worth of saturated (20 grams) and one-quarter of your daily sodium limit (2300 milligrams).

To keep the fat and sodium numbers reasonable, avoid pizzas with extra cheese and multi meat toppings like pepperoni, salami, sausage and bacon. Look for brands with vegetable toppings such as spinach, mushrooms, bell peppers zucchini and onions.

If you want to cut back further on saturated fat, buy a cheeseless pizza such as Life Choices OrganiCuisine Vegetable No Cheese Pizza, Amy's Roasted Vegetable Pizza No Cheese or Amy's Soy Cheese Pizza. Enjoy it sans cheese or add your own grated part skim mozzarella, feta cheese or goat's cheese.

Stick with thin crust. Unless you want – or need – the extra carbohydrate and calories, choose a thin crust pizza. Look for a whole grain crust to boost your fibre intake. Check the ingredient list to see if whole-wheat flour is listed first.

Add your own toppings. Even if you choose a veggie pizza, you probably won't be getting a food guide serving of worth of vegetables (1/2 cup). Before you bake your frozen pizza, add extra vegetables such as red pepper strips, grilled eggplant, mushrooms, frozen chopped spinach, broccoli florets, artichoke hearts and garlic. If you want more protein, top your pizza with leftover grilled chicken, lean meat, shrimp or soy pepperoni.

Round out your meal. To boost the nutrient content of your meal – and to prevent you from devouring the entire pizza – eat your meal with a side of sautéed or steamed vegetables or a tossed green salad. For extra protein and calcium, serve pizza with a glass of low fat milk or calcium enriched soy beverage, or enjoy yogurt and fruit for dessert.





Best Bets

Our best bets (✓✓) have, per serving:

- No more than 4 grams of saturated fat
- No more than 600 milligrams of sodium

Honourable Mentions (✓) come pretty darn close

Rating family size frozen pizzas

Brand	Serving Size	Calories	Fat (g)	Sat. Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)
Compliments					
Mediterranean Style Pita Pizza	1/2	410	16	5	920
Curry Chicken Naan Pizza	1/2	400	12	5	900
Chicken Club Pizza	1/4	300	11	5	730
✓ Organic 3 Cheese & Pesto Thin Crust	1/3	270	10	4	620
✓✓ Organic 5 Vegetable Thin Crust	1/3	250	7	2.5	570
✓✓ Organic Chicken, Red Pepper, Sun-dried Tomato Thin Crust	1/3	260	7	3	580
✓✓ Rising Crust 4 Cheese	1/6	270	8	4	600
✓✓ Rising Crust 4 Meat	1/6	310	11	4.5	660
Rising Crust Deluxe	1/6	310	9	3.5	810
Rising Crust Pepperoni	1/6	320	10	4	760
Thin Crust 4 Cheese	1/4	310	11	6	710
Thin Crust Pepperoni	1/4	340	15	7	920
Thin Crust Deluxe	1/4	370	16	7	1020
✓✓ Balance Roasted Vegetables, Multigrain Thin Crust	1/2	330	8	2.5	480
✓✓ Balance Multigrain Thin Crust Chicken & Vegetable	1/2	340	9	2	420
✓✓ Balance Italian Deli-Style Pizza, Thin Crust	1/2	350	9	3	310
Sensations Tuscan Thin Crust	1/3	410	19	7	1100
Sensations Grilled Mediterranean Veg, Thin Crust	1/3	400	13	6	1010
Presidents Choice					
✓✓ Campania Four Seasons Pizza	1/4	250	6	3	580
Chicago Style Deep Dish Chicken, Bacon Mushroom	1/6	370	18	6	710
Chicago Style Deep Dish Sausage & Pepperoni	1/6	380	19	7	850
Chicago Style Deep Dish Spinach & 3 Cheese	1/6	330	14	6	560
✓ Naan Chicken Tandoori	1/3	250	10	5	640
✓✓ Napolentana Margherita Pizza	1/4	270	8	4	590
New York Sicilian Pepperoni & Ricotta	1/8	320	10	5	850
New York Sicilian Spicy Sausage & Red Onion	1/8	330	9	4	890
Pita Chicken Souvlaki Pizza	1/3	280	12	4	760



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Brand	Serving Size	Calories	Fat (g)	Sat. Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	
Presidents Choice cont...						
	Rising Crust Pizza Quattro Formaggi	1/6	330	14	6	730
	Rising Crust All Dressed	1/6	350	17	7	1170
	Rising Crust Extra Pepperoni	1/6	408	16	5	1004
	Rising Crust Smoked meat	1/6	330	12	4	900
	Stone Baked Thin & Crisp Crust Salami & Mozzarella	1/2	610	23	10	1780
✓	Wood Fired Thin Crust Pizza Quattro Formaggi	1/4	250	10	5	580
	Wood-Fired Thin Crust All Dressed	1/4	270	12	6	620
✓✓	Wood-Fired Thin Crust Ham & Sweet Onion	1/4	240	11	5	420
✓✓	Blue Menu Toppings First Roasted Chicken, Red Pepper & Spinach Stone Baked Thin Crust	1/4	240	7	3	520
✓✓	Blue Menu Toppings First Roasted Vegetable & Goat Cheese Stone Baked Thin Crust Pizza	1/4	260	8	3	470
✓✓	Blue Menu Wood-Fired Thin Crust Mushroom Garlic	1/4	220	7	3	490
Amy's Kitchen						
	Broccoli and Spinach White	1/3	290	14	6	570
✓	4 Cheese	1/3	290	14	5	590
✓✓	3 Cheese with Cornmeal Crust	1/3	340	15	3.5	580
✓	Cheese & Pesto with Whole Wheat Crust	1/3	360	18	4	680
	Cheese	1/3	290	12	5	590
✓✓	Margherita	1/3	280	12	3.5	550
✓✓	Mushroom and Olive	1/3	250	9	3	560
✓✓	Pesto	1/3	310	12	3.5	480
✓✓	Rice Crust Cheese	1/3	320	16	4	590
✓✓	Rice Crust Spinach	1/3	350	20	2	580
✓✓	Roasted Vegetable No Cheese	1/3	270	9	1.5	490
✓✓	Soy Cheeze	1/3	290	11	1	590
✓✓	Spinach	1/3	310	12	4	590
Dr. Oetker						
✓✓	Ristorante Spinach	1/4	220	12	3.5	570
✓✓	Ristorante Mozzarella	1/4	220	11	4	440
✓✓	Ristorante Pomodori	1/4	200	11	3.5	350
✓✓	Ristorante Funghi	1/4	220	12	3	510
✓	Ristorante Quattro Formaggi	1/4	230	12	5	410
✓✓	Ristorante Speciale	1/4	200	10	3.5	510
✓	Ristorante Generosa	1/4	230	13	4.5	680
✓✓	Ristorante Vegetable	1/4	190	8.9	3.6	564



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Brand	Serving Size	Calories	Fat (g)	Sat. Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)
Dr. Oetker cont...					
Casa Di Mama Ultimate Four Cheese	1/4	210	8	6	650
Casa Di Mama Ultimate Spicy Pepperoni	1/4	220	8	4.5	740
Casa Di Mama Ultimate Deluxe	1/4	220	10	6	700
Casa Di Mama Ultimate Three Meat	1/4	220	9	4.8	740
✓ Casa Di Mama Ultimate Hawaiian	1/4	200	7	4.5	610
Delissio					
✓✓ Thin Crispy Crust Roasted Vegetable	1/6	220	8	4	480
Thin Crispy Crust 4 Meat	1/6	280	13	6	730
Thin Crispy Crust Pepperoni	1/6	270	13	6	630
✓ Thin Crispy Crust Deluxe	1/6	270	12	5	600
Thin Crispy Crust 4 Cheese	1/6	260	11	6	570
✓✓ Thin Crispy Crust Grilled Chicken, Tomato, Spinach	1/6	220	8	4	480
Rising Crust Veggie Deluxe	1/6	280	8	3.5	720
Rising Crust Hawaiian	1/6	330	10	4.5	1010
Rising Crust Spicy Chicken Deluxe	1/6	320	10	4	830
Rising Crust Pepperoni	1/6	350	14	6	960
Rising Crust Half and Half Deluxe/Pepperoni	1/6	360	15	6	990
Rising Crust 3 Meat	1/6	360	15	6	950
Rising Crust Canadian	1/6	350	14	6	970
Rising Crust Half and Half Cheese/Pepperoni	1/6	350	14	6	940
Rising Crust 4 Cheese	1/6	320	11	5	820
Ultimate Pizzeria Style Mediterranean Chicken	1/6	240	9	4	710
Ultimate Pizzeria Style Pepperoni	1/6	290	15	7	940
Ultimate Pizzeria Style Deluxe	1/6	240	10	4.5	730
Ultimate Pizzeria Style Pepperoni, Mushroom, Bacon	1/6	270	12	5	850
✓✓ Ultimate Pizzeria Style Tomato and Spinach	1/6	220	8	4	580
✓✓ Harvest Wheat Rising Crust Pepperoni	1/6	270	9	4	600
✓✓ Harvest Wheat Rising Crust 4 Cheese	1/6	270	9	4	570
✓✓ Harvest Wheat Thin Crust Grilled Chicken, Spinach	1/6	200	5	2.5	340
✓✓ Harvest Wheat Thin Crust Deluxe	1/6	200	6	2.5	410
Life Choices OrganiCuisine					
✓✓ Thin Crust 3 Cheese	1/4	180	7	3.5	520
✓✓ Thin Crust Chicken and Spinach	1/4	140	3.5	1.5	460
✓✓ Thin Crust Vegetable No Cheese	1/4	150	4.5	2	440
✓✓ Thin Crust Mushroom and Onion	1/4	150	4.5	2	440



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