

Ingredients in a Pizza—Where Do They Come From?

Wheat—A Grain

Pizza crust is made from wheat. When wheat is ready to harvest, the farmer combines the wheat, loads it onto trucks or wagons, and takes it to the county elevator. The county elevator then ships the wheat by truck, rail, or barge to a terminal. At the terminal, the wheat is sold to the various industries which make food and feed, or it is shipped overseas. The place where wheat is shipped to make food is called the mill. The mill breaks the wheat kernels into pieces and sifts the pieces to get the bran and germ (parts of the wheat kernels) out. This is repeated many times to make the substance we know as flour. The miller then adds B-vitamins and iron for nutrients. The flour is shipped in bags to the bakery or grocery store. Bakers use wheat flour because it contains a magical protein called gluten. To make crust, active yeast, warm water, and oil are added to the flour. The gluten traps the air bubbles the yeast releases and causes the crust to rise.

Tomato Sauce—A Vegetable

Tomato seeds require 75-85 days to develop into mature plants with ripe fruits. When the tomatoes are ripe enough to ship, they are carefully packed in boxes. The boxes are then loaded into semi-trailers for transporting to grocery stores. Some tomatoes are sent to a cannery where they are processed (cooked, squashed, preservatives added) to make sauces or ketchup.



Cheese—A Dairy Product

Cheese is a healthy, tasty food that is made from milk. The cows on the farm are milked by using suction cups to pump the milk from the cow into huge storage tanks. These storage tanks cool the milk until refrigerated tank trucks come to pick it up. The milk is then made into cheese. First, the milk is heated and quickly cooled. This is called pasteurizing. Pasteurizing is a process that kills any harmful bacteria. The processed milk is then treated to form a soft, custard-like substance called curd. The curd contains a liquid called whey, which must be taken out through a special process before cheese can be made. Special knives cut the curd into thousands of small cubes, and the whey oozes from them. Heating and motion force more whey from the curd, and the curd “ball” is then lifted from the vat. The “ball” is broken up into small pieces and put into presses that keep the cheese under great pressure for a few hours to a few days. During pressing more whey drains out, and the curd is shaped into blocks or wheels. After it is pressed, it is immediately wrapped in plastic. The cheese is then aged in cool storage rooms or warehouses. The aging times vary for different cheeses. Brick cheese and others need two months to age while Parmesan requires about a year. After being aged, the cheese is packaged in a wide variety of shapes and sizes.

Pepperoni & Sausage—Pork Products

Pigs go to market in only five to six months at the weight of 240-260 pounds. Pigs may be sold at an auction market or sale barn, or may be bought directly by an order buyer who buys for a packer. Meat inspectors employed by the United States Department of Agriculture inspect live hogs, hog carcasses, and the entire packing plant to make sure that pork is safe to eat. The pork is ground up, and special seasonings are added to make sausage, salami, hot dogs, and pepperoni. About half of the pork produced in the United States is sold in supermarkets. The other half is eaten at restaurants, hospitals, schools, and business cafeterias. Yet, we get a lot more from pigs than pork—we also get insulin to treat human diabetes, and the skin from hogs is used to treat victims of severe burns. Other by-products are glue, glass, rubber, plastics, and heart valves.

