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## Pizza's Past



Katy Keough's topping for Pizza Margherita: red tomato, white mozzarella cheese and green basil.  
Photo Doug Kohen

garlic, and tomatoes grown in the rich volcanic ash of Mt. Vesuvius and fresh mozzarella from water buffalo milk.

Today pizza is about as American as baseball and apple pie, as witnessed by the 100 acres of pizza eaten each day in the U.S.

Other sources:

<http://allthingspizzablog.blogspot.com/2007/10/all-things-pizza-pizza-fun-facts.html>

<http://www.pizzandgarlicbread.com/pizza-fun-facts.aspx>

[http://www.inmamaskitchen.com/FOOD\\_IS\\_ART/pizzahistory.html](http://www.inmamaskitchen.com/FOOD_IS_ART/pizzahistory.html)

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Although pizza has undergone a process of evolution over the centuries, it is most certainly the Mediterranean cultures that deserve credit for creating it. Historical records indicate that ancient Egyptians had a custom of celebrating the Pharaoh's birthday with flat bread seasoned with herbs, and Herodotus, a Greek historian described Babylonian recipes that are very similar to contemporary pizza crust.

Pizza took its current form in pre-Renaissance Naples. Poor peasants used their limited ingredients (wheat flour, olive oil, lard, cheese and herbs) to make seasoned flat bread garnished with cheese. In the 1800s an Italian baker, Raffaele Esposito, was believed to have created a dish for visiting royalty. To impress King Umberto and Queen Margherita, who were touring the area, Signore Esposito chose to top the flat bread with food that would best represent the colors of Italy: red tomato, white mozzarella cheese and green basil.

Mozzarella cheese was one benefit of an invasion from Asian peoples, who brought the water buffalo to Italy. Still today, the best mozzarella is made from water buffalo milk.

Neapolitan pizza is widely regarded as the best in the world, probably due to the fresh ingredients available to pizzerias in Naples: herbs,