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· Trending in the Field ·



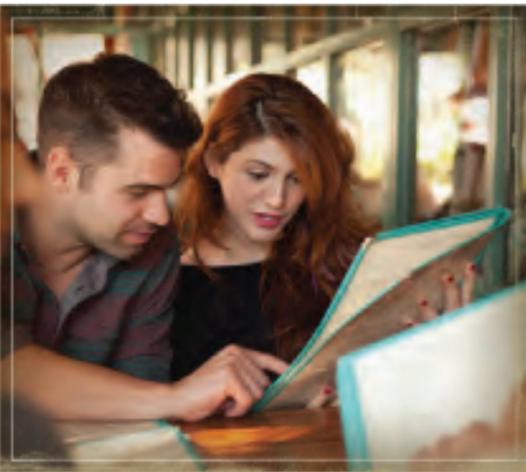
Is the Gluten-Free Trend Still Worth the Investments?

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Variety is the Spice of... New Sales

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Tomato Forecast

Looking ahead to Spring Planting

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Passion Shows

Show Your Passion for Helping Others at the International Pizza Expo

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Recipe Inspiration

Creamy Tomato Bisque

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Once again, Escalon is proud to be a sponsor of the International Pizza Challenge at next month's Pizza Expo—and we'll be awarding a total of up to \$20,000 in extra prize money to any operation that uses Escalon tomatoes and is a top three finisher in the Challenge competition (any division).



Discover the deliciously noticeable difference that gentle processing, no added citric acid, and only the best all-natural tomatoes can make. [Click for a free sample](#) or call 888-ESCALON.

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Is the Gluten-Free Trend Still Worth the Investment?

In 2013, the demand for gluten-free appeared to have no end in sight. But as 2016 dawns, industry experts report the trend may have started to hit its peak—with the number of people avoiding gluten dropping slightly to 29.4% of survey respondents versus 30% in late 2013. That said, leading chains have continued to enter the gluten-free pizza market and nearly every state has a gluten-free pizzeria. If you haven't joined them already, should your business still invest in the trend with one or more offerings? The answer according to the 2015 Pizza Power Report is yes, but don't go overboard. So while a few gluten-free offerings can make sense in your overall menu mix and lead to more satisfied customers, the report warns about building an entire business model around the trend or making a major investment. A strong core mix of pizzas along with a good variety of specialty or dietary-friendly pizzas still remains the best bet for long-term business success.



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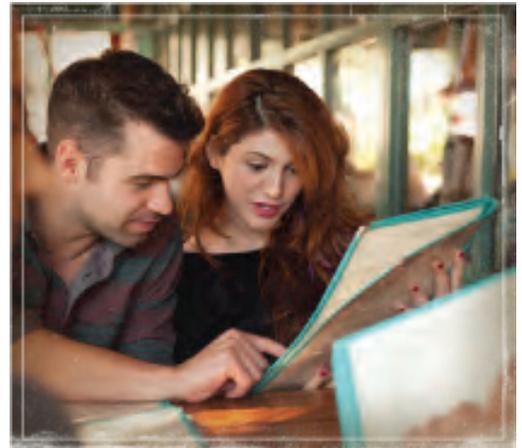
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Variety Is the Spice of...New Sales

A menu with too many options can be overwhelming for both your operation and your customers. But having just the right amount of variety can be an easy way to keep your menu fresh, increase check averages, and capture the “veto vote” when someone in a party wants something other than pizza. With meat, cheese, and vegetables at the core of most pizza operations, pizzerias have a significant amount of existing ingredients that can be transformed into complementary menu items.



Sausage, dough, and cheese make great breakfast items and can help you take advantage of the growing “all-day breakfast” trend. Your canned tomatoes can form the basis of tasty lunch menu specials like a creamy Italian Bisque soup paired with a “grilled cheese” pizza wedge. Turn veggies, meats, and cheese into entrees like salads, sandwiches, and pastas. Downsizing your traditional pizzas into “sliders” to satisfy lighter appetites or indecisive tables is another great option. Whatever your creativity brings forth, you can be assured that a broader menu will not only satisfy more customers, but also help you make your entire operation more efficient and profitable.

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· Tomato Forecast ·

Looking Ahead to Spring Planting



It's been a pretty quiet winter in our California fields, with growers just beginning to till the soil, primarily in the Bakersfield area. In Fresno County, planting is expected to begin in early March—perhaps as early as the last few days of February, depending on weather and soil conditions. Of course, frost is always a concern with February plantings. With this season being in an El Niño year, cool weather will remain a concern as late as April. We're keeping our fingers crossed we will get some additional rainfall followed by our share of warm spring weather. Seed has been delivered to the greenhouse with the expectation for early to mid-August deliveries.

Price negotiation for the 2016 pack is still ongoing, but the first processors have settled at \$72.50 per ton. This reduction in price is being driven by the strong dollar and inventories. The first intentions report projected 13.2 million tons; however, based on domestic consumption and the weak export market, this projection is likely to be reduced.

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· *Passion Shows* ·

Show Your Passion for Helping Others at the International Pizza Expo

As pizzeria owners from across the U.S. prepare to converge in Las Vegas this March, Escalon is making it easy for show attendees to perform a quick act of kindness. For every attendee who drops by the Escalon booth and scans his or her show badge, Escalon will contribute a #10 can of its tomatoes to Stop Hunger Now, a nonprofit delivering food, essential aid and disaster relief to millions of hungry, vulnerable people and disaster victims in 65 countries around the world. Escalon Associate Brand Manager, Jennifer Meeuwse says, “Escalon’s culture is centered around the idea that the little things we do can add up and make a significant difference. With such a large attendance at the Pizza Expo, we felt it was the perfect venue to get operators thinking about how even one little act can help a big cause.” The Can Per Scan event will run the entire four days of the Expo. Meeuwse says Escalon will donate a minimum of one pallet of product but is hoping attendance will increase that contribution substantially.



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· Recipe Inspiration ·



Creamy Tomato Bisque

Using tomatoes and cream already in your kitchen, create a new comfort food experience by pairing this rich and savory bisque with a “grilled cheese” pizza wedge.

Ingredients:

- 4 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2 stalks of celery, finely chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 tsp dried thyme
- 8 cups chicken broth
- 1 #10 can Bella Rossa® Diced Tomatoes in juice
- 6 Tbsp Bontá® Fancy Tomato Paste
- 4 tsp sugar
- 1 cup heavy cream
- salt and pepper to taste

1. Heat the olive oil in a saucepan over medium high heat. Add the chopped onion, celery and garlic.
2. Cook over moderately high heat, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are just beginning to brown, about 5 minutes.
3. Add bay leaves and thyme.
4. Add chicken stock, diced tomatoes, tomato paste, and sugar and bring to a boil.
5. Cover and cook the soup over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender, 15 minutes.
6. Remove from heat. Take out the bay leaves. Using an immersion blender, puree until smooth.
7. Return puree to heat and add the heavy cream, salt, and pepper. Cook until heated through.

Yield: 16 (1 cup) servings

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