



What's the difference between a New York and Chicago pizza?

New York pizza? Chicago pizza? Surely pizza is pizza, right. Wrong. These two iconic US cities have pizza at their heart, but they both have a very different take on pizza. And they are at the heart of a heated debate about which is the best. Passions run high.

Late-night satirist Jon Stewart – a native New Yorker – even claimed Chicago pizza “is not pizza”.

Well, let's dig into this.

Why are New York and Chicago pizzas different?

Pizza arrived in New York from Italy at the beginning of the 20th century, fresh off the boat from Naples. The Neapolitan pizza was simply a tomato passata and blobs of mozzarella on flat dough, the base – in more ways than one – for the New York, thin-crust pizza.

The Chicago pizza stepped on to the dining scene in 1943, thanks to one Pizzeria Uno. Where a New York pizza takes minutes to cook, the Chicago can take a good 45 minutes because it's loaded with marinara sauce, cheese and toppings galore.

What is the typical New York pizza?

The New York pizza is much like our British thin-crust pizza. It has a layer of low-moisture mozzarella and rarely has more than three toppings. Although the edge of the thin-crust New York pizza is crisp, under the toppings it's soft, so you can fold it up and munch it on the go. They're designed and cooked so you have to fold them, to keep the cheese and toppings in place – like your very own calzone.

Often a good 18 inches in diameter, New York pizza is made for sharing, cut into triangular slices – grabbing a single slice is more than enough for most New York lunchers. How did New York pizzas get so big? Because the early New York pizza makers used large coal-burning bread ovens that could cook a lot, fast. So why not!?

What is the typical Chicago pizza?



The Chicago pizza, on the other hand, is a bit like our deep-pan pizza. With high edges and mountains of toppings, cheese and sauce, the Chicago pizza can have a crust nearly an inch deep. This is more of a sit-down affair that you really need cutlery for – it has more toppings, more cheese, more food.

The Chicago pizza is a bit like an open pie – it uses bread dough where we Brits would use pastry. In fact, many Americans refer to it as pizza pie.

The other difference is that while a British deep-pan pizza looks a lot like a New York pizza, just with a deeper, spongier crust, the Chicago pizza pie is upside-down, with cheese on the dough, then toppings and finally the marinara sauce. Jon Stewart might be on to something here.

Tell me a fun fact about pizza

The original Neapolitan pizza – from Italy – only predates the New York version by a few years. And it has a royal connection. When the Italian Queen Magherita visited Naples in 1889, a local pizzeria crafted a new pizza to celebrate her arrival. Inspired by the new Italian flag, the chef used red tomato sauce, white mozzarella cheese and green basil leaves. Red, white and green.

So although pizza came from Italy, New York pizza really was right there at the beginning of the revolution.

Which do you prefer? A deep-dish pizza pie or a slice of thin-crust on the go?

