

editor: Abigail Walch

**PIZZA Rx**  
ITALIAN-STYLE  
PIE FROM  
NYC'S OTTO.



New research suggests pizza is poised to shake up the health-food market.

## american pie

Following closely on the heels of the French paradox—the perplexing phenomenon whereby Parisian women can regularly breakfast on buttery croissants and still remain enviably svelte—comes the Italian enigma: The more pizza you eat, the better your health, according to a recent study in the *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. Researchers surveyed roughly 1,000 people in Milan about their health and lifestyle habits. They discovered that those who reported eating pizza more than twice a week were half as likely to have had a heart attack as those who ate just a couple of slices a month—even after adjusting for factors such as smoking, exercise, and drinking habits that might skew the results. Though researchers can't pinpoint a single miracle ingredient, something about the whole pie—the tomato sauce (full of the antioxidant lycopene) and olive oil (monounsaturated fatty acids)—seems to help protect the heart.

Keep in mind that the difference between Italian pies and their American counterparts “is like the difference between American and Italian football,”

says the study's lead researcher, Silvano Gallus, Sc.D., who admits to having enjoyed the occasional slice at Pizza Hut. Italians tend to forgo the greasy pies delivered by Domino's and the like in favor of traditional pizzerias, where the toppings are modest and portions are smaller (a medium pizza in Italy has 500 to 800

calories, while the U.S. version packs in upwards of 1,900). Americans view pizza as “a vehicle for their cheese,” says Mario Batali, the energetic chef widely credited with rejuvenating New York's tired Italian-food scene. “In Italy, the main event is the dough. They don't put a lot of junk on it.”

Of course, pizza is just one piece of the heart-healthy pie. “Our suggestion is not ‘Eat pizza and you will be protected,’” Gallus says. Italians tend to follow a healthy Mediterranean diet: loads of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains; minimal red meat; some fish; moderate alcohol (mostly wine); and plenty of olive oil. And when a slice or two comes into the mix, so much the better. That's good news for Batali, who says he eats pizza twice a week and dishes up Italian-style pies to New Yorkers at his restaurant Otto Enoteca Pizzeria. Not surprisingly, he thinks the study is “obviously genius.” —ADENA SPINGARN

### FOOD FOR HEART

Pizza margherita, adapted from Otto executive chef Zach Allen

|                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| ¼ cup white wine           | 1½ cups tomato sauce       |
| ¾ cup warm water           | 10 oz. bufala              |
| 1 pkt. active dry yeast    | mozzarella                 |
| 1 T honey                  | To taste: sea salt, extra- |
| 1 tsp. kosher salt         | virgin olive oil,          |
| 1 T extra-virgin olive oil | fresh basil leaves         |
| 3 cups all-purpose flour   | (Makes 4 servings.)        |

1. Combine wine, water, and yeast in a large bowl. Stir until dissolved. Add honey, salt, and olive oil. Mix thoroughly. Add 1 cup of flour and make a wet paste. Add remaining flour.
2. Knead dough on a lightly floured board for 2 to 3 minutes.
3. Place dough in a lightly oiled bowl and cover with a towel. Let rise for 45 minutes.
4. Form dough into 4 ¼-inch-thick discs, 11 inches in diameter. Layer tomato sauce and mozzarella.
5. Bake at 450° on a pizza stone for 10–15 minutes, until dough is lightly browned.
6. Sprinkle with sea salt, olive oil, and basil to taste.