



NEWS RELEASE

Hormel Foods Unveils Top 5 Pizza Trends for 2026: Calabrian Chili, Brisket, and Global Fusion Lead the Menu

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The makers of HORMEL® Pepperoni and FONTANINI® Italian Meats declare heat, premium proteins, and global culinary influences will reign supreme

- **2026 Pizza Trends Unveiled:** Hormel Foods identifies five dominant pizza trends for 2026, headlined by the rise of Calabrian chili specialized heat, premium proteins, and global fusion flavors
- **Strategic Menu Innovation:** With 43% of U.S. consumers seeking new flavors, Hormel Foods highlights the evolution of Limited Time Offers (LTOs) and "Triple Pepperoni" pies as essential drivers for restaurant foot traffic
- **Next-Gen Toppings:** At Pizza Expo, the makers of HORMEL® and FONTANINI® brands are launching specialized products like Hot Calabrian Chili Sausage to meet the growing demand for artisanal and globally inspired "passport pies"

AUSTIN, Minn., March 19, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- As the global pizza community prepares to descend on Las Vegas for the International Pizza Expo ("Pizza Expo"), Hormel Foods (NYSE: HRL), a global branded food company and a leader in the pizza toppings category, is unveiling the five dominant menu items pizza enthusiasts will be seeking this year.

As operators and pizza makers navigate consumer demand for menu innovation and virality, Hormel Foods Foodservice brand managers Logan Kumm and Travis McMillan explain that limited time offers (LTOs) for pizza toppings have evolved from seasonal specialty items into a business strategy. With **43% of US consumers** looking

for new foods/flavors to try all or most of the time, rotating LTOs have emerged as the pizza industry's primary engine for driving foot traffic and generating essential social media buzz.

Key flavors and add-ons you will see this year, and beyond, are the introduction of new flavors and meats, specialty crusts, and an increased global influence. For a first-hand taste of this year's leading pizza topping trends, visit Hormel Foods at the International Pizza Expo (Booth #1725).

Top 5 Pizza Trends for 2026

Turning Up the Spice

Heat is becoming more specialized as consumers move past generic spice toward identified, regional pepper varieties like the Italian Calabrian chili. Recent market innovations confirm this growing consumer demand for complex heat with interest in Calabrian chili **growing 59%** over a four-year growth period.

"While spicy isn't new, what is new is the specificity," said Kumm. "Consumers are moving beyond generic heat toward distinctive, global flavors like Calabrian chili and that's why we're thrilled to share the FONTANINI® Hot Calabrian Chili Sausage and THE PERFORMANCE PEPPERONI® Hot Calabrian Chili Pepperoni at Pizza Expo next week."

"To see partners like Hormel Foods and FONTANINI® infuse ingredients like Calabrian chili or hot honey into products that they've been making for generations gives a new exciting twist, that makes it much more fun for the pizza consumer," said Tony Scardino, World Pizza Champions™ team member.

Brisket

Brisket is graduating from the BBQ pit to the pizza oven, emerging as a premier protein anchor that upgrades the traditional barbecue profile. "Pulled pork or chicken barbecue has long been a favorite on pizza and continues to resonate," said Kumm. "What's changing is how it is being elevated. As consumers gravitate toward more premium, comfort-driven flavors, brisket is emerging as a way to upgrade that familiar barbecue profile with deeper, richer character."

Meat Forward

The traditional "meat enthusiasts" category has transformed into a high-demand powerhouse, specifically through the rise of the "Triple Pepperoni" pie. "The current protein craze has significantly increased the demand for meaty pizzas," said McMillan.

This trend layers distinct varieties, such as the classic cup-and-char, the new Hot Calabrian Chili pepperoni, and traditional slices, to create a masterpiece for protein enthusiasts.

Global Flavor Influence

Premium and globally inspired ingredients are also gaining traction, such as burrata, prosciutto, balsamic reduction, and notably, Indian-inspired toppings which have grown **98% over a four-year growth period**. Global influences are grabbing a solid foothold on the pizza scene with new flavor profiles.

"The most recent pizza topping trends are inspired by global fusion, such as the blending of Spanish or Turkish influence," said McMillan. From Mexican-inspired chorizo to Indian-style butter chicken, these "passport pies" allow consumers to experience adventurous flavors from around the world on a familiar crust.

Specialty Crusts

Crust innovations including sourdough, low-carb options, added protein, and alternative bases like bagels and puff pastry are becoming their own sales drivers. These artisanal bases interest health-conscious diners and those seeking a premium, low-gluten experience.

"Pizza crust is such a precise science and an art. Every tweak in texture and flavor is deliberately crafted to elevate the eating experience, making the crust a signature element that can truly command a premium. It's exciting to see how pizza makers are exploring and pushing those boundaries," McMillan said.

About Hormel Foodservice

Our culinary passion is what fuels us; a shared love of food is the inspiration behind our products, our brands and our protein expertise. Hormel Foodservice prides itself on offering pioneering solutions meant to ignite creativity while minimizing the back-of-house challenges of a fast-paced kitchen. Whatever the need, Hormel Foodservice is here to help its customers thrive. For more information on the vast product collection of Hormel Foodservice, including an array of globally inspired flavors and fully cooked proteins, visit hormelfoodservice.com.

About Hormel Foods — Inspired People. Inspired Food.™

Hormel Foods Corporation, based in Austin, Minnesota, is a global branded food company with over \$12 billion in annual revenue. Its brands include PLANTERS®, SKIPPY®, SPAM®, HORMEL® NATURAL CHOICE®, APPLGATE®, WHOLLY®, HORMEL® BLACK LABEL®, COLUMBUS®, JENNIE-O® and more than 30 other beloved brands. The company is a member of the S&P 500 Index and the S&P 500 Dividend Aristocrats, was named one of the best companies to work for by U.S. News & World Report, one of America's most responsible companies by Newsweek, recognized by TIME magazine as one of the World's Best Companies and has received numerous other awards and

accolades for its corporate responsibility and community service efforts. The company lives by its purpose statement — Inspired People. Inspired Food.™ — to bring some of the world's most trusted and iconic brands to tables across the globe. For more information, visit hormelfoods.com.

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