

Rolling in dough

The Indian pizza has reached its final stage in evolution — a thin, New York-style pie with gourmet toppings

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In India, the identity of pizza is stretching. It is far gone from junk food. One big moment in the Indian history of pizza-eating was the launch of Smokin' Joe's, one of Mumbai's early pizza delivery services. Like Jughead, we could get our pie anywhere and it was even available with a thin crust. But now there are so many pizza moments, that it's best to call its evolution a timeline. We started with Amul cheese and tomato ketchup on chewy bread at Sukh Sagar and Haji Ali Juice Centre. The crusty edge of pizza in India, has now become arugula-and-prosciutto-topped dough varieties, at places like Mumbai's Pali Village Cafe or Ray's Pizza, New York-style, and available by the slice. In 2009, Frank Bruni wrote in the *New York Times* that both "indiscriminate gluttons and discerning gourminds" are crazy for pizza. Lately it's the second lot that is being wooed by restaurants.

"Anything that we eat for long enough will go gourmet," says Riyaz Amlani, a restaurateur whose portfolio includes Mocha, and Salt Water Café. Other pizzeria owners break it down into micro reasons. "Now even our middle class and upper-middle classes are travelling abroad," says Ketan Kadam, owner at the latest Mumbai hotspot Two One Two, Ray's Cafe and Pizzeria, among the newest restaurants that focus on pizza, comes closest to serving the fold-it-stroll-dig-in pepperoni-studded NYC-style pie. Their pizzas reflect the produce available at neighbour, Nature's Basket in Bandra. "Stand in the supermarket and see what is available these days," said Rashmi Mehta, owner of Ray's. Their menu lists prosciutto and piri-piri chicken as toppings. Mehta and her husband Hemant were instrumental in starting Mumbai's first dedicated pizza restaurant, Pizzeria Uno (which went on to become Pizza by the Bay). Their restaurant is named Ray's not after the many NYC 'original' Ray's pizzerias, but after their son, Rehan.

These might be the newest eateries, but pizza has for some time evolved away from its ersatz Indian interpretations, and expanded beyond five-star hotel restaurants that were the first to offer gourmet pies. In Mumbai, California Pizza Kitchen, Mia Cucina, Woodside Inn and Spaghetti Kitchen all offer their own version of thin-crust, barely-east-of-Boot Country pies in Mumbai. In Delhi, the new Hell Pizza offers competition to Amici's Al Funghi with its thin-crust Limbo — topped with caramelised onions, blue cheese and mushrooms. Bengaluru manages with 3Amigos and Toscano.

"Look at how different our home dinner table is today, compared to a couple of decades ago," says Mehta. "Earlier we would just have *roti* and *saag*. Today all the kids are going abroad to study, people are travelling abroad so much more and they know more about international food. Earlier you would go overseas once in a year, get to eat pizza during that week, and that was it. Now all of these are available here." She opened her place in Bandra so it was close to home (she stays in Santa Cruz) but the unexpected advantage that came along was the expatriate com-

munity. "Sometimes expats." At Ray's your preference — 100 per cent whole Del, served a waif scarozza and sun amplified the volume still almost trans!

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Standalone could pick five-star cr innovative crusts at a



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LAVASH PIZZA WITH GOAT CHEESE AND VEGGIES

(So you don't have to bother making your own crust. Plus, it's already sliced.)

Ingredients

- One bag lavash crisps
- 200gm chevre
- 2 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 cups finely chopped and blanched (or steamed) veggies — such as spinach, mushrooms, broccoli, zucchini
- Olive oil
- Prosciutto, one piece for every slice (optional)

Method

Preheat the oven to 190 degrees Celsius. Place the lavash on a baking sheet, and spread the goat cheese evenly. Top with the garlic and chopped vegetables. Layer with prosciutto. Drizzle olive oil, and place the slices in the oven. Bake ten to 15 minutes, until the edges of the lavash are crunchy and golden brown. Remove, cool for a minute and serve.

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With all these about the best pie whole-wheat crust What tastes better, one with no cheeses? Does a wood margherita? Who Because pizza dishes, like the sa jective thing. "It e ment, with a fanta Two One Two's we centre and crusty

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With all the pizza options available, the bickering about the best pie in town has already begun. Is a whole-wheat crust healthier than a no-cheese pizza? What tastes better, a white pie, or one with no cheese, but lots of tomato base and veggies?

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