



Mega Mealzo Magazine

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The Evolution of Takeaway Food in the UK:

A Journey in Flavour



In the modern day-to-day of many in the United Kingdom, the takeaway is a core component of the culture. Ordering food to our doors or picking up a meal on the way home has become almost as popular as cooking an end-of-day meal, and some would argue even more convenient. And not only that, but we have a takeaway for every cuisine niche imaginable. But how did we get here? The answer lies in the Victorian Era...

The 'original' takeaway

When considering what was the first food to "take away" in the UK, there is really only one answer - the classic fish and chips wrapped in newspaper. With origins as far back as the 1860s in London and Lancashire, the "chippy" grew by 1935 to have 35,000 shops across Britain! However, the dominance of the chip shop dinner would be shaken up in the 1960s, with the arrival of international cuisines.



From around the world

With four thousand Indian and Chinese takeaways operating in the United Kingdom by the early 1970s, it was clear to see that takeaway food, more than ever before, had evolved from the ingredients and recipes of the UK. To this end, the offerings from overseas morphed into what we know today through 'Anglicisation' of the food, from changing how the food is cooked, to adding or removing certain ingredients. From pizza dough becoming thicker than their crispy Italian origins in London, to new curries being invented, like the Chicken Tikka Masala in Glasgow, the takeaway became almost as British as the food that had always been part of the UK. Evolving alongside the US chain "fast-food" stores, getting food delivered or to-go would never be the same again.

A new millennium

So, with various cuisines available after their debut in the twentieth century, where did the British palette go from here? The key word going into the twenty-first century was: authenticity. With new cultures adding their flavours to the takeaway choices, especially in the late 2010s, there began to be a shift away from toning down the spice and adding chips to dishes without them, towards making food more or less ripped right out of the country they were from. From Thai and Greek, to Japanese and Mexican, the takeaway world has exploded into one full of choice, and key to that choice, traditional ingredients, preparation, and flavours.

Into the future

What could be next for takeaway food in the United Kingdom going forward? Will new fusions and flavours grab the imagination of the nation? New cooking techniques and trends? Only time will tell!



WHAT'S NEXT FOR TAKEAWAYS?

Adapting to the Demands of the Modern Market

The modern takeaway landscape is one fraught with obstacles, opportunities and a shifting foundation year-on-year. So what are these in the last quarter of 2024, and is there anything your business hasn't utilised that could be useful going forward?



Competitive Pricing and Value Deals

With the cost of living risen to new blistering heights across the UK in 2023-2024, keeping and attracting customers can be attained by using deals and competitive pricing. Saver menus and one-day offers can attract even the most price-sensitive customers and draw them into repeating orders week on week! The key to this, as for any business, is promotion, which comes from social media savvy and carefully placed print media.

Watching the Calories

While healthy doesn't necessarily always match our takeaway cravings, there has been a push across Britain in the past decade to present more options to that effect. As well as more vegetarian and vegan options, the legislation made by the UK means that calorie counts must be included on everything. However, this has caught on, as having more transparent calorie numbers mean that takeaways can market their dishes in new ways, from tasty-low calorie options, to appealing their desire for a "cheat meal" and advertise quite how monstrous the calories are!



For the good of the planet

Gone are the days where single-use plastic and purely imported ingredients were only way to wrap up and cook meals to have on-the-go. These days, the work done by environmentalists around the globe has pushed the UK into a new, cleaner age. While waste is still an issue for the takeaway industry, recyclable alternatives have made a massive difference in how we consume our takeaways, and leaning into this has become incredibly profitable for businesses nationwide. As well, there has been a growth in the local produce used to make meals, removing a huge amount of the average takeaway's carbon footprint!



As we look ahead, the takeaway industry in the UK shows no sign of slowing down, and in fact is adapting to every obstacle in its way, as well as evolving year after year to stay relevant. As a result, who knows what it will look like in another decade!

AUTHENTIC PIZZA:

FROM NEAPOLITAN TO BRITAIN

In the UK, pizza is in the top three most popular takeaway foods, with millions of people enjoying a slice or three regularly. But what is the difference between what we eat in Britain, and the true and traditional pizza dish from Italy?

Where did it come from, really?

While it is accepted that the homeland of pizza is Italy, where and when is a much more hotly debated topic. While the 'pizza' was coined around the 1050-1100 AD, the majority of scholars believe pizza came from Naples, rather than the often cited capital Rome. Even then, it took years for the tomato base to become the staple to pizza that is today.



What makes pizza so tasty?

It is all down to how different foods interact with our taste buds. Traditionally made pizzas produce a lot of glutamate. Glutamate provides a savoury sensation to our taste buds from the cheese, tomatoes, and the animal proteins of the pizza. This, with the sweet, sour and bitter tastes from pizzas ingredients, make them so delicious to our brains.

What makes pizza so tasty?

If we want to get technical, the only two pizzas that are in line with the original Neapolitan recipe are Margherita and Marinara. They are also stone or wooden baked, and using San Marzano tomatoes, and fresh mozzarella, cannot be greater than 13 3/4 inches in diameter and one-tenth of an inch tall! Many would argue this thin and more 'natural' pizza brings it closer to the ideal made almost a millennium ago.

A close-up photograph of a person's hand pouring a vibrant red tomato sauce from a stainless steel bowl onto a pizza base. The pizza is resting on a wooden peel, and another pizza is visible in the background. The scene is set in a kitchen with a marble countertop.

What has changed in British pizzas?

In short, in the modern day in the UK, everything has changed. While pizzerias across the nation often still maintain a thin crust, stone-baked, tomato-based pizza, the options have exploded into every direction. If you want a thick and doughy crust with chicken tikka chicken pizzas on top, you can order that. If you don't want a tomato base and instead want a barbeque sauce, many places provide that option. If you want a vegan pizza? Almost every pizzeria has an option for this now.

Which is better?

Can't really be said! It's all down to the customer and what they want. The most important thing is that nowadays the pizza remains infinitely popular, as it adapts and morphs with each community, and that new and interesting recipes can be found alongside the classics.