



Pizza perfect?

We reveal which pizza chains make the healthiest and tastiest pizzas on the high street – and which ones left us with a bad taste in our mouths

You'd expect pizzas to be high in fat – load any meal with cheese and it won't be the healthiest choice. But though most restaurant pizzas get a red light for fats and salt, all pizza chains are not equal, according to a Which? test.

Pizza Hut pizzas were the smallest we tested, but were the highest in overall fat and the second highest in saturated fat – contributing 70% of a woman's recommended daily maximum of saturated fat. Its pizzas also scored poorly for taste and *Good Food Guide* reviewers said one branch seemed dirty (see p62).

Although we found that Pizza Express pizzas got a red light for salt and saturated fat, based on the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) traffic-light system, average overall fat levels were within the more moderate 'amber' zone, unlike pizzas from other chains.

In the FSA system, a red light means food is high in fats, salt or sugar and

should be an occasional treat. Amber means the food is fine most of the time, and green signifies a healthier choice.

On average, a margherita pizza from all the chains we tested contains more than 50% of an adult's recommended daily maximum of salt.

Which? says

Pizzas are tempting – and not just because they appeal to our taste buds. Internet two-for-one vouchers can bring the cost of dining out for two down to around £6 – assuming you can resist dessert.

It's all about building food that's higher in fat – like pizza – into a healthy diet. Most chains offer healthier options, such as Pizza Hut's salad bar, or Pizza Express's Leggera pizzas – half pizza, half salad – and some let you ask for less mozzarella.

Our test results can help you make informed choices, but we can't test every option in every restaurant. Pizza Hut has nutritional details at www.pizzahut.co.uk,

and Pizza Express plans to introduce this soon – at the moment it lists calories at www.pizzaexpress.com.

We'd like chains to follow FSA guidance and give calorie information (at least) when you choose your food, such as on menus. Pizza Hut is already piloting this in nine branches, while others, including Frankie & Benny's, Pizza Express and Zizzi, are working with the FSA in this area.

We'd also like chains to keep fat and salt levels as low as possible without sacrificing taste. Pizza Express was our reviewers' favourite restaurant – the fact that its pizzas are the lowest on test in fat and saturated fat shows that pizzas don't have to overload on grease to taste great.

WHICH.CO.UK

For more on the Food Standards Agency's traffic-light system go to

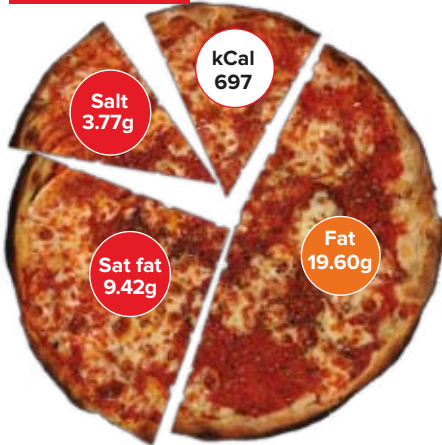
www.which.co.uk/foodlabelling

GUIDELINE DAILY AMOUNTS

NUTRIENT	MAN	WOMAN	10-YEAR-OLD BOY
Calories (kCal) ^a	2500	2000	1950
Total fat (g)	95	70	75
Saturated fat (g)	30	20	25
Sugar (g)	120	90	100
Salt (g)	6	6	5

^a Calories are averages for a 74kg man, a 60kg woman and a 28kg child but will vary by body weight. All other amounts are upper limits/maximums regardless of weight

LOWEST IN FAT

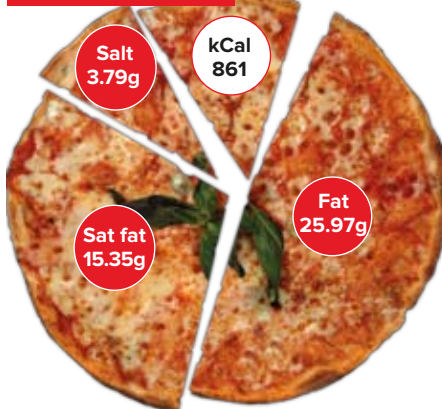


Pizza Express 'Margherita' £5.90

Average size 26.4cm Average weight 302g

Pizza Express – our reviewers' favourite chain – is the only restaurant to get an amber light for total fat and to keep saturated fat below 10g per pizza (though the FSA still regards this as high). Its pizzas were the second smallest on test but had the highest salt content per 100g of pizza. It wants to cut the salt in its dough by 5% by 2010 and is looking at other ways to reduce salt.

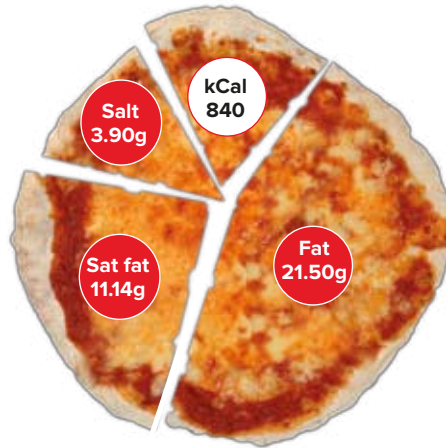
HIGHEST IN SAT FAT



Prezzo 'Margherita' £6.25

Average size 29.9cm Average weight 339g

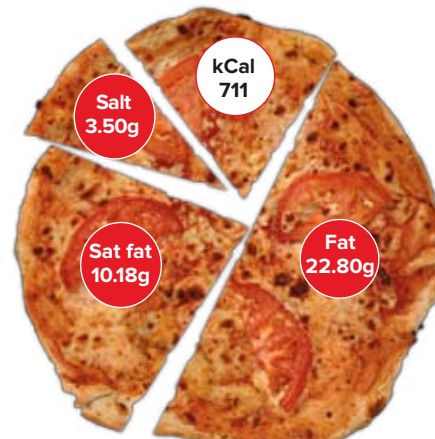
Prezzo's pizzas were the second largest on test and the highest in saturated fat – one pizza contains more than 75% of a woman's guideline daily amount. Prezzo came fourth in our *Good Food Guide* battle of the pizza chains, though our inspectors had mixed experiences. Prezzo did not respond to queries on its plans for reducing salt and fat levels in pizza.



Ask 'Margherita' £5.95

Average size 29.6cm Average weight 337g

Ask pizzas contained the highest amount of sugar on test, but, like all the pizzas we tested, they still get a green light for sugar content. Its pizzas came somewhere in the middle when we compared their size, saturated fat, fat, and overall calorie levels to the other chains. Ask was our *Good Food Guide* reviewers' second favourite pizza restaurant. It was unable to respond to our queries on plans for salt and fat reduction by our deadline.



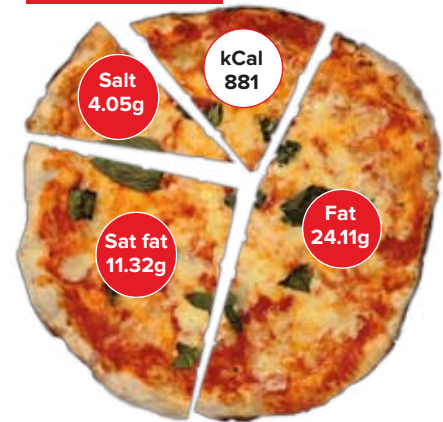
Frankie & Benny's 'Large Margherita' £5.95

Average size 28.7cm Average weight 311g

Despite being labelled 'large', Frankie & Benny's pizzas were a similar size to others tested. No nutrient level was particularly high or low compared with other chains' pizzas, though like most others it got a red light for fats and salt. It came joint last with Pizza Hut in our taste test. Frankie & Benny's says it's working with the FSA on nutritional improvements, including fat and salt.

Averages based on a sample of nine pizzas

HIGHEST IN SALT

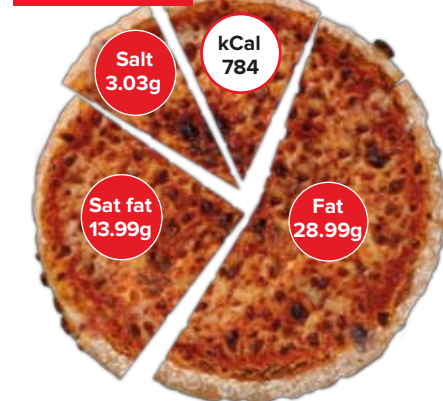


Zizzi 'Margherita' £6.50

Average size 30.3cm Average weight 340g

Zizzi's pizzas were the most expensive and highest in salt of those we tested. If a 10-year-old ate the whole pizza they'd be consuming more than 80% of their recommended daily salt maximum. Its pizzas were also highest in calories, although this is perhaps unsurprising as, on average, they were the largest we tested. Zizzi was our reviewers' third favourite pizza restaurant. It says its menu offers a balanced range of 'Italian classics', including salads.

HIGHEST IN FAT



Pizza Hut 'Italian Style Margherita' £4.99

Average size 24.0cm Average weight 277g

Despite their relatively small size, Pizza Hut pizzas were the fattiest on test, with nearly 10g more fat overall than Pizza Express's. They did, however, have the lowest salt levels. Pizza Hut was our *Good Food Guide* reviewers' least favourite chain, along with Frankie & Benny's. Pizza Hut says it's improving nutrition, reducing total fat content in many products, and has pledged to meet the FSA's salt targets in 2010. ►►

PEPPERONI OR PEPPERS?

How different toppings affect the nutritional value of a pizza



Toppings to avoid

Toppings such as bacon, pepperoni and extra cheese are usually high in salt, fat and saturated fat and will bump these nutrient levels even further into the red. Barbecue sauces are best chosen in moderation too, as they're often high in sugar.

Toppings to load up on

For meat and fish lovers, toppings such as prawns or grilled chicken are low-fat options. But even better are vegetable toppings. They're low in calories, fat, sugar and salt and can help you reach your five a day.



OUR RESEARCH

We carried out blind nutrition tests on individual, thin-crust margherita pizzas from 12 branches each of Ask, Frankie & Benny's, Pizza Express, Pizza Hut, Prezzo and Zizzi. The branches were located across the UK. Assuming you'd eat the whole pizza in each case, we compared the average for each chain against the Food Standards Agency's traffic-light labelling system and the food industry's guideline daily amounts for men, women and children.

Taste buds at the ready...

Which pizza chains wowed our exacting *Good Food Guide* reviewers, and which left them with a bad taste in their mouths? Three reviewers visited a branch each of the six restaurants and rated their margherita and pepperoni pizzas for taste, quality and value for money, plus the overall restaurant experience. The scores are out of 45.



See p7 for details of a *Good Food Guide* special offer

1 Good Food Guide favourite: Pizza Express (30.5/45)



Tasty pizzas and an enjoyable restaurant experience made Pizza Express a good place for a night out. Our reviewers gave it a good score of 30.5, praising its 'flavoursome pizzas with good quality, well-balanced ingredients'. They were impressed by innovative pizza options, but felt pizzas were let down by slightly soggy bases.

4 Good for romance on a budget: Prezzo (25.5/45)



Prezzo scored 25.5, and all our *Good Food Guide* reviewers rated its décor and atmosphere. Nice touches such as tea lights made it pleasant to linger over a glass of wine. According to the reviewers, Prezzo's score was pulled down by inconsistency between branches in the quality and seasoning of the pizzas, and the odd soggy base.

2 Welcomes young kids: Ask (27/45)



Ask got a *Good Food Guide* score of 27, and the reviewers had a consistent experience across all three branches. They enjoyed the polite, friendly service, and the fact that the restaurants seemed to welcome young children. They liked the fresh-tasting pizzas – although they felt the base could get hard over time.

5 If you have no other options post-cinema:

Frankie & Benny's (11/45)



This chain scored 11 points. Branches (often based in leisure complexes) had a buzzy atmosphere, with open kitchens and polite, friendly service, but in one case the restaurant seemed dirty, with tables left uncleared. Reviewers felt the quality of the ingredients seemed poor.

3 Good for a varied menu: Zizzi (26.5/45)



Zizzi scored 26.5 overall, but divided the reviewers' opinions. While two reviewers noted a lack of generosity of ingredients, the third felt the base was the best she tried and the addition of fresh herbs was a nice touch. They all liked the open kitchens, well-thought-out and varied menu and friendly atmosphere, but found the service slow.

6 Best avoided: Pizza Hut (11/45)



Pizza Hut came joint last with Frankie & Benny's, with a score of 11. The reviewers scored pizzas poorly on taste and quality of ingredients, and found one of the restaurants they visited seemed dirty. But the pizzas were the cheapest of those on test, and the pick-and-mix-style salad bar may be a good way to get fussy children interested in veg.