

Michigan: The Unlikely Pizza Capital of the United States (and Maybe the WORLD)



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Most know Detroit as the Motor City and Michigan as the heart of the automotive industry, but did you know that Michigan is also the pizza capital of the United States and, quite possibly, the world?

A Slice of Economic Context

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) ranks the United States as the world's largest economy for 2024, with an estimated current dollar GDP of just over \$29.16 trillion or 26.5% of global GDP. Michigan is ranked as the 14th largest contributor to U.S. GDP, as The Great Lakes State produces around \$703 billion. If Michigan were an independent nation, it would rank as the 23rd largest economy globally, nestled between Taiwan and Belgium, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

America's Love for Pizza

Pizza, America's comfort food and virtually a daily menu staple for many Americans, is an estimated \$50 billion industry in the U.S. Pizza is consumed by an estimated 13% of the U.S. population on any given day — and nearly half of Americans eat pizza at least once per week.

The average American consumes about 46 slices of pizza per year at a rate of 350 slices of pizza per second. That's about 3 billion pizzas devoured in the country annually. The five busiest days for pizza sales in the U.S. are Super Bowl Sunday, New Year's Eve, Halloween, Thanksgiving Eve and New Year's Day.

From the smallest towns to the largest cities, you are almost guaranteed to find over 80,000 pizzerias in the U.S.

Global Pizza Perspectives

Modern pizza traces its roots back to the west coast of Italy — Naples to be exact. Most pizza is consumed in North America and Western Europe with \$58.3 billion and \$58 billion spent respectively, or about 73% of worldwide consumption in 2023. Pizza has several simple but interesting characteristics; it is usually cooked in a round shape, cut into triangle pieces and, if delivered, it comes in a square box. The basic ingredients like dough, sauce, and cheese are a canvas for thousands of combinations of items and toppings to make each pizza unique. Domino's Pizza says there are 34 million possible pizza combinations on its menu alone.

Pizza Styles for Every Palate

There are many styles of pizza including New York, Neapolitan, New Haven (wood-oven), Chicago deep-dish (pizza pie), Detroit (originally made with the forged steel pans used for automotive parts), Sicilian, Greek and countless others. The unique Detroit-Style is square in shape with thick crust and crunchy cheesy corner slices. New York style pizza is traditionally thin and wide, and resembles the shape we normally think of for pizza. Regardless of the shape or the style, we love pizza.

Michigan's Pizza Titans

Nearly every town big and small has a local pizzeria, which is loved and supported, however, most of the pizza sold in the U.S. is through large chains and franchises. Based on 2023 sales data compiled by Statista, Michigan had four of the Top 10 quick service pizza chains in the United States by sales in 2023.

"The Michigan Four" includes:

- Domino's Pizza (#1)
- Little Caesars Pizza (#3)
- Hungry Howie's Pizza (#8)
- Jet's Pizza (#9)

These four pizza companies accounted for 30.5% of the U.S. pizza sales in 2023, recording a combined \$14.36 billion of the \$46.98 billion industry total. These four pizza companies recorded nearly 15% of global pizza sales with \$23.6 billion of the \$159 billion total. In fact, the headquarters for the “Michigan Four” are all located within less than 60 miles of each other in Southeast Michigan (Ann Arbor, Madison Heights, Detroit and Sterling Heights).

Domino’s Pizza is the largest pizza chain in the world by sales with \$18.3 billion in 2023 representing 11.5% of global pizza sales. They achieved this level with over 20,000 stores in 90 countries combined. Domino’s Pizza and Little Caesars Pizza together represent 14.3% of global sales. Little Caesars Pizza has well over 5,000 stores in 27 countries, generating just under \$4.5 billion in global sales, with Hungry Howie’s and Jet’s Pizza adding almost \$859 million in sales, while both companies have yet to expand beyond the borders of the United States.

Eight Michigan Entrepreneurs Pioneered Pizza

As noted in Michigan Radio’s podcast series, [Dough Dynasty](#), Michigan became the epicenter for major pizza chains when innovative solutions were introduced making pizza a ubiquitous part of American life.

Some of Michigan’s greatest pizza pioneers include:

Domino’s Pizza: Founded in 1960 by brothers Tom and James Monaghan in Ypsilanti, Domino’s pioneered the pizza delivery model, including the corrugated box. Today, it’s the largest pizza chain globally, with over 20,000 stores in more than 90 countries. Headquartered in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Domino’s continues to innovate the delivery model with tools like Domino’s Tracker, which allows customers to monitor their order in real time.

Little Caesars Pizza: Established in 1959 by Mike and Marian Ilitch in Garden City, a Detroit suburb, Little Caesars became famous for its “Pizza! Pizza!” slogan and the Hot-N-Ready concept. The company is headquartered in Detroit and operates over 5,000 stores in 27 countries.

Hungry Howie’s Pizza: Starting in 1973 in Taylor, Michigan, Jim Hearn and later Steve Jackson introduced flavored crusts to the pizza world. Based in Madison Heights, Hungry Howie’s continues to delight customers across the United States.

Jet’s Pizza: Brothers Eugene and John Jetts opened their first store in Jetts Party Shoppe & Pizzeria in Sterling Heights in 1978. Jet’s popularized Detroit-style pizza and has grown to become a national franchise favorite.

Domestic and Global Brand Reach

While sales are one way to determine market size and presence, the number of stores is an important metric as well. [PMQ Pizza Power 2025](#) ranks the top 30 U.S. based pizza chains based on number of stores for the year 2023. “The Michigan Four” are nearly all in the Top 10.

PIZZA CHAIN	UNITS (Stores)	STATES WITH STORES
Domino’s Pizza	6,854 (#2)	50
Little Caesars Pizza	4,217 (#4)	50
Hungry Howie’s	524 (#10)	21
Jet’s Pizza	439 (#12)	22

The No. 1 pizza chain in the U.S. is Hunt Brothers Pizza, which has 9,703 locations in 33 states. Hunt Brothers was not included in the PMQ article, however based on number of units, they would top the list at No. 1. With over 12,000 locations, the four Michigan-based pizza companies have over 15% of the total pizza stores in the U.S. (including independents).

From an international standpoint, the “Michigan Four” ranks high on a [Yahoo Finance](#) list of the top 25 Pizza restaurant chains by number of units globally.

PIZZA CHAIN	UNIT (Stores)	INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE
Domino’s Pizza	20,591 (#1)	90 Countries
Little Caesars Pizza	5,403 (#5)	27 Countries
Hungry Howie’s	524 (#14)	1 Country
Jet’s Pizza	439 (#18)	1 Country

Domino’s is clearly the global leader in number of locations and reach. The four Michigan-based companies make up 11% of pizza locations globally with 26,957 units.

Michigan’s Claim to the Pizza Throne

With over 30% of U.S. pizza sales coming from Michigan-based businesses and nearly 15% of worldwide sales, no other state or country comes close to Michigan in generating pizza sales on a national or global basis. So, the next time you savor a slice, remember that Michigan isn’t just about cars and lakes — it’s the epicenter of a pizza phenomenon that satisfies cravings around the world. We therefore declare that Michigan truly is the Pizza Capital of the United States and the world!

Study Methodology

We evaluated the pizza market in the United States and the entire world. We looked at consumption in terms of sales dollars and then who was selling the pizza. The pizza industry has everything from mom-and-pop stores to large pizza chains. After gathering sales dollars for the largest pizza chains (both domestically and internationally), we determined market share for the entire pizza market. This is where it became clear that the largest pizza chains have a significant share of the market both domestically and globally. Much like analysis of automobile manufacturers, all sales are attributable to the location of the headquarters of the pizza chain. We recognize not all of the sales for the “Michigan Four” happened in the State of Michigan but are attributable to the organization started in Michigan and still headquartered in Michigan.

About the Authors

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