

MENU · FAST CASUAL

Focaccio’s rebuilds its pizza line around 24-hour fermented dough

The bakery-café’s new “Old World Heritage” pizzas extend its slow-fermentation playbook from bread to pies — and signal a chain confident enough to start playing offense again.

By **Renee Walsh** | Managing Editor | April 16, 2024 | 4 Min Read



The Toscana — roasted garlic cream, prosciutto, fresh fig, arugula and shaved pecorino — one of four new pizzas on Focaccio's 24-hour “Old World Heritage” dough. | Photo courtesy of Focaccio's Old World Bakery & Café

Focaccio’s Old World Bakery & Café is overhauling its pizza. This spring the chain relaunched its pizza program on a dough cold-fermented for a full 24 hours — the same slow-fermentation approach behind the breads at the center of its “Real Bread. Real Bakery.” platform — and added four new artisan pizzas it calls the “Old World Heritage” line.

The dough is mixed and rested for a day before it is hand-stretched and baked in the chain’s stone hearth ovens. The longer ferment, the company says, yields a crust with more flavor, a blistered char and an open, airy structure — closer to an artisan pizzeria than a typical fast-casual pie. In other words, it is the bakery’s bread philosophy, applied to pizza.

The four new pizzas — the Calabrese, the Toscana, the Napoli and the Funghi — join carryover favorites such as the Margherita and Old World Magic, all now built on the longer-fermented dough. Notably absent are the BBQ Chicken and Alfredo pizzas that had lingered from an earlier era; both were cut as part of the relaunch.

For chief marketing officer Elena Castellanos, dropping two pizzas matters as much as adding four. “BBQ chicken and Alfredo were holdovers from when we were trying to be everything to everyone,” she said. “They had nothing to do with who we are. Heritage pizza on 24-hour dough does — it’s the same craft and the same patience, just in a different shape.”

The relaunch marks a change in posture. After three years spent repairing the brand — retiring its wellness-era menu, then rebuilding around its bakery — Focaccio’s is now adding rather than subtracting, a move executives describe as operating from strength rather than recovery.

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Steve Perkins, Director of Brand Marketing, Focaccio’s

Steve Perkins, recently promoted to director of brand marketing, said the harder work happens in the cafés, not on the menu board. “Anyone can put a new pizza on a menu board,” Perkins said. “Doing it on dough that needs a 24-hour head start means changing how every café plans its day. But that friction is the point — it’s the part competitors won’t bother to copy.”

Focaccio’s, which is privately held, declined to share sales for the line but said early pizza mix and repeat orders were running ahead of the items it replaced. For a brand that spent years apologizing for chasing trends, the message of the relaunch is a simpler one: it has decided what it is, and it intends to press the advantage.

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