

The Sustainable Pizzeria Playbook

Practical Systems That Reduce Waste
and Protect Profits



Chef Junnie Lai, PhD, MBA

Global Cuisine Consulting

Sustainability should strengthen your bottom line.





Sustainability in a Pizzeria

Good for the Planet. Good for Profits. Responsible stewardship in every detail.

1 RECYCLING STATION

- Keeps waste out of landfills
- Reduces disposal costs

2 COMPOSTABLE PIZZA BOXES

- Made from renewable resources
- Lower packaging costs over time

3 ENERGY-EFFICIENT OVENS

- Uses less energy, lower emissions
- Low utility bills, boosts savings

4 LOCALLY SOURCED INGREDIENTS

- Supports local farmers, reduces transport impact
- Stronger community, loyal customers

5 REDUCING FOOD WASTE

- Divert scraps to compost, use ingredients mindfully
- Saves on food costs, improves profitability

LOCAL INGREDIENTS.
— BETTER PIZZA. —
STRONGER COMMUNITY.

LOCAL
FARMS
LOCAL
FLAVOR

EVERY SCRAP
HAS A PURPOSE



BETTER FOR
THE PLANET



BETTER FOR
YOUR BOTTOM LINE

SUSTAINABLE CHOICES.
STRONGER BUSINESS.



Sustainability Should Strengthen Your Bottom Line

Three practical systems. One stronger pizzeria.

SIGNATURE MENU SYSTEM
FOCUS THE MENU

ROLE & ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM
OWN THE WORK

OPPORTUNITY CALENDAR SYSTEM
PLAN THE MOMENT



Protect food • Use labor well • Capture opportunity

REDUCE WASTE → PROTECT PROFIT

Start with one weak link.

Simplify one item • Assign one responsibility • Plan one opportunity



PRACTICAL TOOL #1

Find the Waste Before You Fix It

Look beyond the trash can: food, labor, time, capacity and missed opportunity.

Walk the operation during prep, service and close. Mark each pattern as NO ISSUE, WATCH or PRIORITY.

FOOD	LABOR & TALENT	TIME & CAPACITY	OPPORTUNITY
Overproduction / excess prep ■ N ■ W ■ P	Unclear ownership ■ N ■ W ■ P	Prep bottlenecks ■ N ■ W ■ P	Local events missed ■ N ■ W ■ P
Inconsistent portions ■ N ■ W ■ P	Duplicated work ■ N ■ W ■ P	Poor sequencing ■ N ■ W ■ P	Seasonal / cultural moments missed ■ N ■ W ■ P
Spoilage / expired ingredients ■ N ■ W ■ P	Waiting for product / equipment ■ N ■ W ■ P	Idle equipment / capacity ■ N ■ W ■ P	Catering overlooked ■ N ■ W ■ P
Single-use ingredients ■ N ■ W ■ P	Prep at the wrong time ■ N ■ W ■ P	Too many items at one station ■ N ■ W ■ P	Slow periods without offers ■ N ■ W ■ P
Remakes / returns ■ N ■ W ■ P	Frequent rework ■ N ■ W ■ P	Unplanned downtime ■ N ■ W ■ P	Capacity available but unsold ■ N ■ W ■ P
Poor labeling / rotation ■ N ■ W ■ P	Training gaps ■ N ■ W ■ P		

BIGGEST WASTE PATTERN WE SHOULD ADDRESS FIRST:

The Signature Menu System

Purpose: Focus the menu around what your pizzeria does best.



1 Review performance

Sales • profitability • prep time •
ingredient use • consistency

2 Choose 3 signature pizzas

Craveable • profitable • distinctive •
repeatable

3 Evaluate the rest

Keep • improve • make seasonal •
remove

4 Remove complexity

Slow sellers • single-use ingredients •
excessive preparation

5 Build around the winners

Standardize recipes • purchasing • prep
• training • menu placement

6 Review quarterly

Keep the menu aligned with customer
demand and production capacity

DECISION RULE

Low sales + high prep + single-use ingredients → Redesign • Make Seasonal • Remove



Know what defines you. Remove what distracts you. Build around what customers return for.

Example: From Menu Complexity to Signature Strength



BEFORE

28 specialty pizzas
7 single-use ingredients
Bottom 8 = only 6% of sales

APPLY THE SYSTEM

Feature the strongest 3
Remove 4 low sellers
Make 2 seasonal
Redesign 2 to share ingredients

BUSINESS RESULT

Less prep and spoilage
Easier ordering and training
Clearer identity
More consistent production

**The goal is not simply a smaller menu.
It is a more intentional menu.**



Signature Menu Worksheet

Focus the menu around what your pizzeria does best.

Review each item against demand, profit, ingredient use, execution and signature value.

Menu Item	Demand	Margin	Cross-use	Execution	Signature Value	Decision
	High / Med / Low	High / Med / Low	Strong / Some / Unique	Easy / OK / Hard	Strong / Some / Weak	Keep / Improve / Seasonal / Remove
	High / Med / Low	High / Med / Low	Strong / Some / Unique	Easy / OK / Hard	Strong / Some / Weak	Keep / Improve / Seasonal / Remove
	High / Med / Low	High / Med / Low	Strong / Some / Unique	Easy / OK / Hard	Strong / Some / Weak	Keep / Improve / Seasonal / Remove
	High / Med / Low	High / Med / Low	Strong / Some / Unique	Easy / OK / Hard	Strong / Some / Weak	Keep / Improve / Seasonal / Remove
	High / Med / Low	High / Med / Low	Strong / Some / Unique	Easy / OK / Hard	Strong / Some / Weak	Keep / Improve / Seasonal / Remove
	High / Med / Low	High / Med / Low	Strong / Some / Unique	Easy / OK / Hard	Strong / Some / Weak	Keep / Improve / Seasonal / Remove
	High / Med / Low	High / Med / Low	Strong / Some / Unique	Easy / OK / Hard	Strong / Some / Weak	Keep / Improve / Seasonal / Remove

YOUR 3 SIGNATURE PIZZAS

1.

2.

3.

The Role & Accountability System

Purpose: Turn paid labor hours into completed work—and protect management time.



Three areas of responsibility

FRONT OF HOUSE

Own the guest experience

- Guest service, phone & online orders
- Dining room and packaging readiness
- Order accuracy and handoff
- Opening, closing, cleaning & restocking

BACK OF HOUSE

Own preparation and production

- Receiving, storage, prep & labeling
- Dough, sauce and pizza production
- Dishwashing and sanitation
- Equipment and station closing

MANAGEMENT

Own performance and profit

- Scheduling, labor control & training
- Purchasing, inventory, pricing & cost
- Sales analysis and maintenance
- Marketing, relationships and growth

The goal is not rigid walls. It is clear ownership + reliable handoffs.

Every employee needs five things

- 1 What they own
- 2 What they complete
- 3 When it is due
- 4 The standard
- 5 Who verifies

Assign by shift: Open • Prep • Service • Restock • Close • Weekly maintenance

**“If you spend all your time working in the pizzeria,
you have no time to work on the pizzeria.”**

A job description explains the position. A task list makes the position operational.



Example: Turn “Get Ready for Dinner” Into an Accountable Task

THE VAGUE INSTRUCTION

“Everyone, make sure the takeout station is ready.”

No owner • No deadline
No standard • No verification



MAKE THE ASSIGNMENT OPERATIONAL

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 WHO OWNS IT
Front-of-house shift lead | 4 THE STANDARD
Boxes folded • Bags + condiments stocked
Labels + printer working |
| 2 WHAT THEY COMPLETE
Prepare the takeout and packaging station | 5 WHO VERIFIES
Manager during the pre-shift walkthrough |
| 3 WHEN IT IS DUE
Ready by 4:30 PM • Recheck at 7:00 PM | |

Accountability is not more supervision. It is less ambiguity.

Fewer missing supplies • Faster handoffs • Fewer order errors • More management time



Role & Accountability Worksheet

Turn paid labor hours into completed work - with clear ownership and reliable handoffs.

Every assignment needs five things: who owns it, what is completed, when it is due, the standard, and who verifies.

RESPONSIBILITY / TASK	WHO OWNS IT	WHEN DUE	WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE	WHO VERIFIES

HANDOFF CHECK: What must this role receive before work begins, and what must be ready for the next role?

The Opportunity Calendar System

Purpose: Spot demand moments early—then prepare the offer, people, ingredients and capacity.



OPPORTUNITY WASTE

The sale that never happened: no offer • understaffed • stockout • kitchen overload • margin lost to discounting

Build a 90-day opportunity calendar

- Holidays, sports and food occasions
- School, community and office events
- Weather, seasons and local traditions
- Predictably slow days and dayparts

GAME-DAY EXAMPLE

Signature pizza • profitable bundle • advance orders • capacity limit

Use the same promotion process every time

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Identify the moment
Event, season or need | 2 Select the offer
Pizza, bundle or LTO | 3 Confirm profit
Food, labor, package, discount | 4 Check capacity
Ovens, staff, prep, orders |
| 5 Assign responsibility
Prepare, promote, track | 6 Launch early
Build awareness + advance orders | 7 Measure results
Sales, profit, repeat, issues | |

“What will give customers a reason to order from us during this specific moment?”

**A successful promotion does not simply create more orders.
It creates profitable orders your operation is prepared to deliver.**



Example: Festa della Repubblica

JUNE 2

Italian Republic Day

Turn an Italian celebration into planned, profitable demand.

Apply the seven-step process

1

IDENTIFY THE MOMENT

June 2: Italian Republic Day

2

SELECT THE OFFER

Three Regions tasting box

3

CONFIRM PROFIT

Build mostly from ingredients already in use

4

CHECK CAPACITY

Set a box limit and pickup windows

5

ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITY

BOH prepares • FOH handles preorders • Manager tracks margin

6

LAUNCH EARLY

Promote 7–10 days ahead

7

MEASURE RESULTS

Boxes sold • average check • food cost • new and repeat guests



THE OFFER

Three Regions of Italy Tasting Box

Margherita • Prosciutto & arugula • Mushroom & rosemary

The calendar finds the moment. Preparation turns it into profitable demand.

Introduce the occasion • feature signature products • control capacity • protect margin



90-Day Opportunity Calendar

Spot demand moments early enough to prepare the offer, people, ingredients and capacity.

Look beyond major holidays: sports, schools, community events, Italian celebrations, weather, office activity, catering occasions and local traditions.

DATE / WEEK	EVENT OR DEMAND MOMENT	CUSTOMER NEED	OFFER / MENU IDEA	LEAD TIME	OWNER
DECISION RULE: If an opportunity requires special inventory, labor, marketing or production changes, put it on the calendar early enough to act.					

Profitable Promotion Planner

Use the same seven-step process every time.

1	IDENTIFY THE MOMENT Event, season or customer need	5	ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITY Prepare + promote + track
2	SELECT THE OFFER Pizza, bundle, tasting box or LTO	6	LAUNCH EARLY Awareness + advance orders
3	CONFIRM PROFIT Food + labor + packaging + discount	7	MEASURE RESULTS Sales + profit + repeat + issues
4	CHECK CAPACITY Ovens + staff + prep + order volume		

A successful promotion does not simply create more orders. It creates profitable orders your operation is prepared to deliver.

Quick Sustainability Self-Assessment

Score how effectively your pizzeria uses the resources it already pays for.

Score each statement: 1 = rarely true 2 = inconsistent 3 = usually true 4 = strong system 5 = measured and managed.

AREA	STATEMENT	SCORE 1-5
MENU & FOOD	Best-selling and most profitable items are understood.	1 2 3 4 5
	Ingredients are intentionally cross-used.	1 2 3 4 5
	Portion and prep standards reduce overproduction.	1 2 3 4 5
	Slow-moving items and ingredients are reviewed.	1 2 3 4 5
PEOPLE & LABOR	Each role has clear responsibilities and standards.	1 2 3 4 5
	Tasks have clear owners and deadlines.	1 2 3 4 5
	Handoffs between roles are reliable.	1 2 3 4 5
	Training supports quality and efficient execution.	1 2 3 4 5
TIME & CAPACITY	Prep is sequenced to reduce bottlenecks.	1 2 3 4 5
	Equipment and capacity are used intentionally.	1 2 3 4 5
	Slow periods have planned productive work.	1 2 3 4 5
	Rework and unnecessary steps are reduced.	1 2 3 4 5
OPPORTUNITY	We maintain a forward-looking opportunity calendar.	1 2 3 4 5
	Promotions are planned early enough for operations.	1 2 3 4 5
	Staffing and purchasing reflect anticipated demand.	1 2 3 4 5
	We pursue catering, community and off-peak revenue.	1 2 3 4 5

Your 90-Day Action Plan

Start with one weak link. Simplify one item. Assign one responsibility. Plan one opportunity.

Do not try to fix everything at once. Choose the few actions most likely to protect food, use labor well and capture profitable demand.

PRIORITY	ACTION	OWNER	START	DUE	MEASURE OF SUCCESS
1					
2					
3					
90-DAY COMMITMENT					

By _____, we will improve _____

by _____.

REDUCE WASTE → PROTECT PROFIT → BUILD TO LAST

BETTER
PIZZA
BRIGHTER
TOMORROW

BUILD TO LAST

— ONE SLICE AT A TIME —

Protect the basics. Perfect every bite.
Master the details. Keep the future bright.
Serve with purpose. Let every slice show:
Quality, care — and a business built to grow.

*Good Pizza
Brighter Days*

