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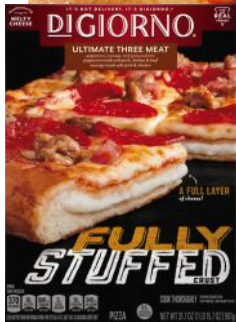
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REGENERATION

A man, identified as Dave Miniatt, is the central figure in the image. He is wearing a white lab coat over a blue shirt, a bright orange hard hat with a name tag that says "DAVE", and blue nitrile gloves. He is smiling and holding a large, rectangular piece of cooked meat, possibly brisket, which is wrapped in clear plastic. The background shows a meat processing facility with other workers in white coats and hard hats, and industrial equipment.

Dave Miniatt leads his family's 130-year-old meat processing firm in new directions

Photo by Getty

**PRODUCT:**

DiGiorno Ultimate
Three Meat Fully
Stuffed Crust Pizza

PRICE:

\$10.49/1 lb. 15.7 oz.
pizza

PLUS:

Great pepperoni and
sausage flavor

PROBLEM:

Poor use of salami;
soggy texture

It's **NOT** **DELIVERED**

DiGiorno underwhelms on its promise of an 'Ultimate' meat pizza experience.

Shelf space in the frozen food aisle dedicated to frozen pizzas continually grows as people look for exciting differentiators, and are willing to pay more for high-quality pizzas. DiGiorno, the No.1-selling pizza brand in the U.S., regularly expands their offerings with such enticing items as their famous rising crust and hand-tossed style crust pizzas. One of their newest entries is a “Fully Stuffed Crust Ultimate Three Meat Pizza” featuring pepperoni, sausage and genoa salami. Let’s see what our taste-testers thought about the promise of this meat-forward pizza.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Our pizza tasters ranged in age from 11 up. We included a mix of those who only eat frozen pizzas,

those who only order from a local pizzeria, and those who eat all forms.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

As one taster respectfully stated, “DiGiorno has a good reputation and I know the brand.” However, the rest of the comments were more skeptically interrogative than complimentary in nature.

The brand’s inclusion of genoa salami had some puzzled. One posited, “Salami is an interesting choice. I’ve never seen salami on a pizza. Usually, it’s ham and bacon on ultimate meat pizzas.” Another matter-of-factly asked, “Why is there salami on this? I don’t really need it.”

Other tasters, meanwhile, had other questions about information — or lack thereof — on the

“Salami didn’t taste very good. It looked like I needed to eat it with a fork or it would be messy, and I don’t normally **eat pizza with a fork.**”

pizza box. “Why does the front of the box detail what the pepperoni and sausage are made of, but not the salami?” one asked, and another wondered, “Why doesn’t the box call out what kind of cheese this is? It just says, ‘mouthwatering melty cheese’ and ‘full layer of cheese.’”

And as appetizing as the box made the pizza look, tasters weren’t all that impressed with the portion or the nutritional panel. One taster said, “I don’t see getting six slices out of this — maybe two to three at most. I could eat it myself. It’s just to make the calories look less than they are.” “The pizza looks really appetizing on the box, but one slice has 960mg of sodium!” another emphasized, while another exclaimed, “42% DV of sodium in one slice!”

Having opened the box, most tasters weren’t all that pleased with what they saw then, either, particularly with the distribution and portioning of the three meats. “It’s basically all pepperoni and salami — maybe 3 or 4 pieces of sausage,” one taster lamented, for example. Another shared, “Since the meat was not uniformly spread out, I spread it out before cooking. It’s not a lot of meat for an ‘Ultimate Three Meat.’ That was disappointing.” “All I see is pepperoni in the middle — not like the box where it’s all spread out,” yet another added.

And lastly, one taster “very familiar” with the DiGiorno brand was perplexed by the ‘Ultimate’ product’s packaging, saying, “What was strange is our plastic packaging wasn’t the typical easy-open feature we have experienced with all the other pizzas by this brand. Why?”

TASTE, TEXTURE AND MORE

Digging in, tasters remarked on the good flavor and texture of the meats. “The meat that was there was good quality and had good flavor,” one taster said, hinting disappointment again at the amount of meats on the pizza.

Others shared in the opinion of the pizza’s quality meats — at least two of the three, that is. “The pepperoni and the sausage both had good flavor

and texture, but there wasn’t enough sausage,” one taster said. “The salami was tangy, and I really don’t need it on there.” Another shared, “The salami was more tangy and spicy versus sweet. I thought Genoa salami was supposed to be a little sweet?” And another added, “The sausage was very good, like when I order pizza. Salami didn’t taste very good. It looked like I needed to eat it with a fork or it would be messy, and I don’t normally eat pizza with a fork. It just looked really oily, greasy, cheesy.”

The salami certainly was a sticking point for many tasters. “My boyfriend is not a fan of salami, so I took it off,” one taster said. “However, it shows that it has lots of sausage on it and there was maybe three to four pieces total. It’s basically all pepperoni and salami. The pepperoni was good.” Another taster remarked, “My 11-year-old son loves DiGiorno! He liked the pepperoni and sausage, but the salami was too much meat, and its flavor was overpowering for him. He didn’t like the crust because it was crunchy on the outside but tasted undercooked in the middle.”

The 11-year-old’s experience was similar to other tasters. “The piece is actually heavy, but it’s doughy,” one said, while another added, “It’s very gooey.” Another was also taken aback: “It’s a softer chew than I expected, based on the look. It’s too soft for me. Is that because it’s a stuffed crust? I like a crisp crust.” A third taster added, “It never crisped up. Not sure if it’s from the extra cheese, but it was soggy. The three meats were good, but got drowned out by the cheese.”

A family that tried the pizza was also a fan of the three meats, though they too cited a lack of meat overall; they added the pizza was sufficient for the three of them, but would not serve six. Another taster, though, said it was more than enough: “There’s too much going on. I couldn’t eat more than a small piece. It’s heavy.”

And for one taster, DiGiorno simply failed to meet up to its tag line: “It’s Not Delivery. It’s DiGiorno.” “It took quite a long time to cook — about

TASTE *test*

40 minutes,” that taster said. “Delivery would have come quicker. Isn’t that DiGiorno’s whole thing?”

UPSHOT

Overall, our tasters either thought there was too much or too little in DiGiorno’s Ultimate Three Meat pizza.

For some, there was perhaps too much meat. “I would buy other DiGiorno Pizzas again, but not this one. It’s not crisp enough, probably because of everything on it,” one taster explained. Another shared, “It wasn’t bad at all, but too much meat and cheese. Lighter on both would have been better. Maybe just pepperoni, sausage and mozzarella with the sauce.” And another said, “It was just too much. Too much cheese, too much crust. The excessiveness of the pizza muddled the individual flavors of each meat component.”

For others, there wasn’t enough, at least in terms of the type of meat topping the pizza. As one taster put it, “Only 7/8 of the pizza had meat on it, and there were only four pieces of sausage. We fought over the piece with the most pepperoni. I don’t need the salami. The sausage and pepperoni had great flavor, so give me more of that.” A like-minded taster added: “A good pie, but needs more meat to justify the name ‘Ultimate Three Meat.’”

Meanwhile, tasters were apparently mixed on the value proposition, with one taster saying, “It reminds me of my childhood. I grew up eating frozen pizza, so it’s kind of nostalgic. It’s a good value for the money.” Another offered, “I love the concept, but between the underwhelming taste, the soggy, and the crazy amount of calories for a small piece, it wouldn’t be worth it to me.”



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TASTE *test*

CONCLUSION

Consumer trust is hard to win, and can be easy to lose. When a brand like DiGiorno promises “Ultimate Three Meat” and “FULLY STUFFED” crust, that needs to be delivered, or some will consider it untrustworthy. We’re hearing a few things here from our tasters. For the true pizza-with-meat lovers, there’s disappointment with meat quantity, placement and distribution. And if one advertises three meats, no eater should be able to count the 3 to 4 token pieces of sausage on

an entire pie! That isn’t “Ultimate.” From others, sometimes less is more. In this case, possibly featuring only two meats (salami was a head scratcher for some) with better distribution will garner more overall appeal. And, perhaps voluminous cheese in the crust, which few mentioned but which adversely affected the crust texture for many, is not as big a “wow,” especially on a three-meat pizza. With respect to the good integrity of DiGiorno, this current pizza is more like puffery, sadly, than “ultimate.”

by **Jacqueline Beckley, The Understanding & Insight Group, and Anna Marie Cesario and Jennifer Vahalik, U&I Collaboration LLC.**

Food product development and consumer research veterans, Jacqueline Beckley, Anna Marie Cesario and Jennifer Vahalik, join Meatingplace Magazine as regular contributors to MeatingTaste, a consumer sampling of new products featured in our monthly Taste Test column. Here’s how the program works: The meat item is distributed to consumers, including the core demographic, for preparation in their own houses. No instructions are provided to the consumer, other than to write their overall impressions of the product, as well as to evaluate the flavor, texture, packaging and ease of use. Beckley, Cesario and Vahalik look for common threads by using Getting It!®, a system developed to listen to consumers about products. The sample of people is not intended to be a ‘taste test’ in a controlled setting, nor is it intended to simulate a focus group. Others are doing both. Rather, the intent is to interpret the response of the people who might purchase a product like this and use it, simply based on their encounters with the product in their individual, unique home environment. That is how U&I has been developing cutting-edge product and people understanding since 1999.

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