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**REAL CALIFORNIA MILK LAUNCHES 8TH ANNUAL NATIONAL SEARCH FOR
THE BEST PIZZA RECIPES FEATURING CALIFORNIA CHEESE & DAIRY**

*2026 Real California Pizza Contest features two dynamic categories,
eight finalists, and \$18,500 in prize money*

Tracy, Calif. – March 3, 2026 – The California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB) has officially launched the eighth annual Real California Pizza Contest (RCPC), a nationwide search for the best pizza recipes showcasing Real California cheese and dairy. Open to professional chefs and culinary students across the U.S., the 2026 contest will award \$18,500 in total domestic prize money to the most innovative and commercially viable pizza creations featuring California cow's milk cheeses.

The online entry period opens March 1, 2026, and closes April 24, 2026. Eight finalists will receive an all-expense-paid trip to compete head-to-head at a live bake-off event on July 14, 2026, in Napa, Calif., at the Culinary Institute of America at Copia.

This year's contest focuses on two competitive categories designed to highlight both creativity and real-world menu success:

- **On the Menu**: A pizza currently offered as a regular menu item or limited time offer that features at least two Real California cheeses or dairy products and demonstrates strong

commercial appeal. The recipe must include a California-made mozzarella cheese as one of the cheeses/dairy products.

- **California Freestyle:** An original, cheese-centric pizza inspired by ingredients grown or popular in the Golden State. Recipes must include at least three Real California cheeses, with again, one being mozzarella cheese.

“The Real California Pizza Contest continues to highlight the unmatched quality, performance, and versatility of California cheeses in foodservice,” said Katie Cameron, Director of Foodservice for the California Milk Advisory Board. “We’re excited to see how chefs across the country use Real California Mozzarella and other California cheeses to create pizzas that inspire creativity while delivering real menu impact.”

Each submission requires a pizza name, photograph, ingredient list specifying Real California cheeses, and a brief description of the recipe concept and use of dairy.

All entries will be evaluated by a professional culinary panel, with the top four submissions in each category advancing as finalists. During the live bake-off in Napa, finalists will present and prepare their pizzas for an esteemed judging panel of award-winning pizza chefs and industry leaders.

Each category winner will receive \$5,000. One overall Grand Prize Champion will be selected from the category winners and awarded an additional \$2,500. The six remaining finalists will each receive \$1,000. In addition, promotional support funding may be made available to winning chefs to help bring their pizzas to market.

The contest continues to serve as a premier platform for showcasing the depth and diversity of California cheeses. With more than 250 varieties and styles made from sustainably sourced milk produced by California family dairy farms, cheeses bearing the Real California Milk seal deliver exceptional flavor, consistency, and performance in foodservice kitchens nationwide.

Professional chefs and culinary students can review full contest details, official rules, and submit entries at: <https://realcaliforniamilkfoodservice.com/pizza-contest/>

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About Real California Milk / The California Milk Advisory Board

The California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB), an instrumentality of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, is funded by the state’s dairy farm families who lead the nation in sustainable dairy farming practices. With a vision to nourish the world with the wholesome goodness of Real California Milk, the CMAB’s programs focus on increasing demand for California’s sustainable dairy products in the state, across the U.S., and around the world through advertising, public relations, research, and retail and foodservice promotional programs.

The Foodservice Division of the CMAB supports foodservice operators and distributors that use Real California dairy products. The CMAB offers marketing and promotional support for foodservice operators that purchase dairy products with the Real California Milk seal, which

means they are made with milk from California's more than 1,000 family dairy farms, using some of the most sustainable dairy practices in the nation.

For more information on sourcing cheese from California, contact the foodservice team at 209.883.6455 (MILK), email businessdevelopment@cmab.net, or visit RealCaliforniaMilkFoodservice.com, [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

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