

The Two-Year Quest to Bring the True Taste of Mendelsohn's to Israel

Recreating Mendelsohn's pizza in Jerusalem required far more than its original recipe. It took repeated transatlantic testing, carefully engineered flour and water—and 52 different blends of mozzarella and Muenster.

THE STORY BEHIND THE SLICE

Opening a restaurant in another country often means adapting: changing ingredients, adjusting recipes, and learning to work with what is locally available.

But when Mendelsohn's began planning its Jerusalem location, adaptation was precisely what the team wanted to avoid.

A slice served in Israel had to deliver the same experience as a slice served in America—the familiar crust, the balanced sauce, and the distinctive layer of melted mozzarella and Muenster. It could not be an interpretation of Mendelsohn's or a version created specifically for the Israeli market.

It had to be Mendelsohn's.

Achieving that proved considerably more difficult than transporting a recipe across the Atlantic. Flour behaved differently. Water changed the dough. Israeli cheeses varied in moisture, flavor, texture, and melting performance. Even minor ingredients had to be reconsidered.

What followed was a two-year process of testing, traveling, comparing, and adjusting—made even more complicated by war.

**Mendelsohn's has brought
its authentic taste to Israel.**

America Became the Control Kitchen

The Mendelsohn's team already knew exactly how its pizza should taste. The challenge was determining why an early Israeli test sometimes failed to produce that familiar result.

Was the flour responsible? The water? The cheese? Was a smaller ingredient reacting differently during mixing, fermentation, or baking?

The established American operation became the project's control kitchen. Ingredients sourced or developed in Israel were brought to America and tested using Mendelsohn's familiar recipes, equipment, and production methods.

If an ingredient performed correctly in America, the team knew it was moving in the right direction. If it did not, its specifications had to be reconsidered.

The process became a transatlantic rhythm:

Develop it in Israel. Bring it to America. Test it. Adjust it. Return it to Israel. Test it again.

Some ingredients completed that journey several times before receiving approval.

First, the Flour

For an ingredient composed so simply, flour has an enormous influence over a pizza.

Its characteristics determine how much water a dough absorbs, how it behaves in the mixer, how it ferments, how easily it stretches, and what happens when it meets the heat of the oven. A seemingly minor variation can produce a crust with an entirely different structure and texture.

The team began with the specifications of the flour used by Mendelsohn's in America. Working with Israeli suppliers, it searched for flour capable of producing the same results.

Samples were tested in Israel and then carried back to America. There, they were incorporated into

Mendelsohn's regular production process and compared with the established dough.

When a sample failed to behave properly, the team adjusted its specifications and started again. Each trial brought the flour closer to the required balance of strength, absorption, fermentation, and texture.

Eventually, the flour was right. Then the team confronted an ingredient most diners rarely think about.

The Water Problem

Pizza makers have long understood that water is not merely a supporting ingredient in dough. Its mineral composition and other characteristics can affect mixing, fermentation, elasticity, and baking.

A dough recipe that performs beautifully in one city may behave differently when prepared with another city's water.

To recreate Mendelsohn's dough in Jerusalem, the team approached the Israeli water with the same precision it had applied to the flour. Specifications were developed, dough was tested, and samples were brought back to America for comparison.

The objective was never simply to create a good pizza crust. Jerusalem has no shortage of good bread or skilled bakers.

The objective was to create Mendelsohn's crust.

The 52-Blend Cheese Challenge

If flour and water formed the foundation of the project, cheese became its most demanding test.

Mendelsohn's does not top its American pizza with mozzarella alone. Its characteristic flavor comes from a carefully balanced combination of mozzarella and Muenster—a blend chosen not only for how it tastes, but also for the way it melts and bakes.

Reproducing that blend in Israel was not as simple as purchasing two comparable cheeses. Products made by different manufacturers can vary

significantly in moisture, salt, texture, fat content, flavor, and performance under heat.

The team visited several Israeli cheese manufacturers and began experimenting.

Every new mozzarella-and-Muenster combination had to be tested on a finished pizza. A cheese could taste excellent on its own and still be wrong for the recipe. It needed to melt evenly, develop the proper texture, and complement the dough and sauce without overpowering either one.

Some blends came close to the desired flavor but failed in the oven. Others melted beautifully but did not reproduce the familiar Mendelsohn's taste.

Altogether, the team evaluated 52 different mozzarella-and-Muenster blends.

“52 cheese blends—until the flavor, melt, and balance were exactly right.”

Each test revealed another detail requiring attention: a different proportion, a different product, or a different manufacturer. The process continued until the team found the precise combination that delivered the flavor and performance it had been pursuing.

A Pizza Is a System, Not a List of Ingredients

The cheese trials made one principle increasingly clear: the Mendelsohn's taste could not be traced to a single ingredient.

It came from the relationship among all of them.

The crust changes how the sauce is experienced. The sauce has to balance the richness and saltiness of the mozzarella-and-Muenster blend. The cheese must melt and bake correctly on that particular dough. Sugar, spices, and seasonings shape the finished flavor in ways that may be subtle but are immediately noticeable when something is missing.

Individually excellent ingredients would not necessarily produce a Mendelsohn's pizza. Every component had to be judged as part of the finished slice.

The team was not simply matching flour, water, sauce, and cheese. It was recreating the way those ingredients interacted.

No Detail Was Too Small

Once the primary challenges had been addressed, the team turned to the ingredients that rarely receive attention in a story about pizza: sugar, spices, seasonings, and the other smaller components of the recipes.

The specifications of the American products were compared with those available from Israeli suppliers. Potential replacements were tested in America, returned to Israel, and tested again as part of the complete recipe.

These were details most customers would never see. Yet the team understood that customers would taste the difference if they were wrong.

Consistency required every ingredient—large or small—to perform correctly in combination with all the others.

The Sauce Had Already Made the Journey

Ironically, one of the pizza's defining elements required the least reinvention.

The sauce was already Israeli.

For approximately 10 years, Mendelsohn's had been purchasing its tomato products from an Israeli manufacturer. The relationship was established, and the product had already proven itself in the company's American kitchens.

While nearly every other component had to be located, tested, adjusted, or recreated, the tomatoes had already completed the journey from Israel to America.

Now they were coming home.

Where Pizza Tradition Met Food Technology

An important part of the project was Heshy's experience in food technology.

He traveled to Israel several times to help the team move beyond the broad question of whether a test pizza tasted good. Instead, the team could identify why the dough was behaving differently, why a particular cheese was not melting correctly, or which specification needed to change to reproduce the American result consistently.

The work combined two kinds of knowledge.

One was intuitive: the deeply familiar understanding of what a Mendelson's pizza should taste like.

The other was technical: the ability to examine how flour, water, cheese, and other ingredients behaved during production and determine what needed to be adjusted.

That combination replaced guesswork with a deliberate process. Each disappointing test became information that could guide the next one.

Two Years of Testing—During a War

Altogether, developing the Israeli pizza took approximately two years.

Part of that timeline reflected the team's refusal to approve an ingredient simply because it produced a good result. It had to produce the correct result.

The war made an already complicated process considerably more difficult. Travel was disrupted, moving products between Israel and America became less predictable, and tasks that ordinarily might have required weeks stretched much longer.

Still, the testing continued.

Heshy returned to Israel several times. Ingredients continued to travel between the two countries. A successful adjustment led to the next stage; a disappointing test sent the team back to isolate the problem and begin again.

There may have been faster ways to open the restaurant. But rushing the process would have defeated its purpose.

Not an Israeli Version of Mendelson's

Throughout the project, the guiding philosophy remained unchanged.

Mendelson's was not developing a new pizza for Israel. It was bringing the pizza its customers already knew and loved to Jerusalem.

That required attention to details few customers would ever consider: the specifications of the flour, the characteristics of the water, the precise balance of mozzarella and Muenster, the spices, the sugar, and the way every component behaved in relation to the others.

Finally, after two years of traveling, testing, adjusting, and retesting, the elements came together.

The dough was right. The cheese blend was right. The sauce was right. The smallest ingredients were right.

Most importantly, they were right together.

When the finished pizza emerged from the oven, it delivered the unmistakable flavor the team had been pursuing from the beginning.

It was not an Israeli interpretation of Mendelson's. It was not a pizza inspired by Mendelson's. And it was not merely close enough.

Mendelson's had brought its authentic taste to Israel.