

# Fit to be *Tied*



## Give your appetizer menu a welcome twist with garlic knots

Story by Carol Meres Kroskey

Photos by Rick Daugherty

**A** New York favorite has spread across the nation — addictive garlic knots have shown up on pizzeria menus from Florida to California. At their simplest, they're just strips of pizza dough tied into a knot and drenched in garlic butter. However, garlic knots can be customized, too. Some operators make simple knots, while others tuck in the ends for rounded rolls. Some proof the rolls, while others bake them right away. The butter mixture can be applied before or after baking, or both. And, the mixture can vary from basic garlic butter to one that includes olive oil and other seasonings, including fresh herbs.

Originally from New York, owner Keith

Arnold named his Littleton, Colorado, business after this classic New York pizzeria product — The Garlic Knot has two locations. He also planned ahead for production of these iconic rolls, installing a second oven specifically for baking them.

"Because we have standing orders, we make thousands of garlic knots each day," Arnold says. "So we didn't want to tie up our pizza ovens. Besides, we bake them at a lower temperature. Because we proof them first, they turn out light and fluffy. For good flavor, we brush on garlic butter before and after baking."

"Although flour prices have been up and down a lot, we think garlic knots yield a good profit. We start with a 20-ounce piece of pizza dough for 20 knots, then just tie a loop, leaving the ends loose. We put as many as will fit in a

7-inch tin — 'about 10-ish' we tell our customers — and sell that for \$3. When we sell them as appetizers, they go into a basket, which allows us to reuse the tins."

Of course, most pizzerias make garlic knots in more modest quantities. They're popular as appetizers or as a side with salads or pizza, says Tim Cullen, managing partner of Ramunto's Brick and Brew Pizza in Hanover, New Hampshire. Individual rolls sell for 70 cents, while half-dozens and dozens have appropriate price breaks. "They're one of our more popular appetizers," Cullen says, "especially with marinara sauce on the side."

**Ramunto's cooks make garlic knots three or four times a day depending on business volume or delivery orders.** Starting with pizza dough cut into 2-ounce strips, the cooks tie the knot, then wind the ends around the loop to tuck them underneath, yielding a braid-like appearance. After proofing, the knots are baked. Before serving, the cooks dip the warm rolls into a mixture of melted butter, garlic and grated Parmesan cheese.

"We make two different types of knots," Cullen says. "Besides baking individual round knots, we flatten the regular knots and elongate them to look more like a shoe. We press those knots around the edge of a pizza crust, and brush them with the butter sauce before adding a tomato-basil sauce that we make especially for this pizza. The garlic knot pizza is one of our most popular pizzas."

Another advocate of proofing first is Paul Villaggio, owner of Villaggio's Pizzeria in Newberry, Florida. He credits garlic rolls with helping his year-old business to prosper. "We like to give our customers their money's worth," he says, "so our price for garlic knots is 3 for \$1. Marinara sauce is 50 cents more, but most customers like the garlic knots alone."

"Our customers like a fluffy consistency, so we make them ahead by tying simple knots, putting them on a tray, covering them with plastic wrap, and letting them rise. We bake them in our pizza ovens, so we're careful they don't get burned. We let them sit for about 10 minutes before dipping them in the garlic butter."

"Because we try to bring passion to our food, and offer customers something different, we use freshly chopped garlic in the mixture. But we also add parsley, oregano, olive oil and Parmesan. That's what makes our garlic knots a best seller for us."

For authenticity, however, John Lombardi, owner of Lombardi's Brookside Inn and Pizzeria in Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania, says that garlic knots should be dense and chewy, with some body. "We get a lot of New Yorkers who stop in and say they're surprised to find real garlic knots in the middle of nowhere," he says. "We don't proof our knots before we bake them because the pizza dough has already proofed in the trays."

"Instead, we roll out a dough ball as for pizza, use a



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cutter in a spiral to cut a long rope of dough, then cut individual sections. We get about 25 pieces from a 27-ounce dough. After tying knots, we put them on trays, then bake them at 500 F just long enough for them to get golden. After this stage, we can store them in the refrigerator, where they'll keep for a couple of days.

"When we get an order, we put six in a 9-inch aluminum pan, add the butter

mixture on top, then bake them until they're browned. That way, the rolls are sopping with butter and garlicky flavor.

If we're serving them on a plate, we pour any extra butter on top." ♦

**Carol Meres Kroskey** is a freelance writer based in Chicago. She has extensive knowledge covering the baking and food service industries for a variety of publications.



### Garlic Knots

*Yield: about 10 dozen 1-ounce rolls*

- 16 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 to 2 teaspoons salt\*
- 1½ cups olive oil, melted butter\*\* or combination
- 8 pounds pizza dough
- Chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley (optional)
- Grated Parmesan cheese (optional)
- Marinara sauce (optional)

\*If using salted butter, adjust to taste

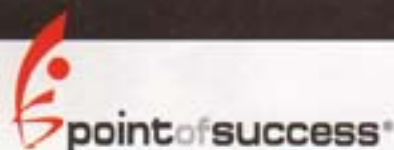
\*\*3 sticks or 12 ounces

Using flat side of knife, mash garlic with salt. Blend with oil and/or butter. Let stand for at least 1 hour.

Roll out prepared dough into rectangles about 6 to 7 inches wide. Cut 1-inch strips with pizza wheel. Roll strips slightly to round edges. Tie into loose knot (if desired, tuck ends into middle of knot).

Dip in garlic mixture or brush with olive oil. Place on oiled sheet pans or trays 2 to 3 inches apart; proof until doubled in size.

Bake at 450 F for 12 to 15 minutes or until golden brown (adjust baking time for higher temperatures). Toss warm knots in remaining garlic mixture and sprinkle with parsley and cheese, if desired. Serve with marinara sauce on the side, if desired.



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