

Cocaine Pizza Leads to Drug Ring Bust at Düsseldorf Restaurant

One of Düsseldorf's Best-Selling Pizzas Came with a Side of Cocaine

A popular pizza in Düsseldorf had an unusual extra topping—cocaine. The pizza, known as “pizza No. 40” on the menu, was one of the best-selling items at a local pizzeria. It gained quite a reputation, not just for its taste, but for what was secretly being delivered alongside it.

Criminal director Michael Graf von Moltke confirmed the bizarre case to reporters in Düsseldorf. According to ABC News, citing the German news agency DPA, von Moltke revealed that authorities were first tipped off in March by food inspectors. What started as a routine inspection quickly turned into a large-scale drug investigation.

A Hidden Ingredient Behind Pizza No. 40's Popularity

When food inspectors raised suspicions, police placed the pizzeria under surveillance. They soon discovered why pizza No. 40 was attracting so much attention. Upon visiting the apartment of the 36-year-old pizzeria operator, police were met with a surprising reaction. The owner allegedly threw a bag filled with illegal substances—cocaine, cannabis, and €268,000 (\$290,378) in cash—out of his window in a desperate attempt to hide the evidence. However, the bag landed right in the arms of a police officer waiting below, sealing the owner's fate.

The Owner Released but Continued Serving “Cocaine Pizza”

After the incident, the pizzeria manager was taken into custody and detained for several days. Despite the arrest and the clear evidence against him, the owner was released. Astonishingly, upon his release, he reopened the restaurant and resumed selling his infamous “pizza No. 40”—continuing the illegal operation.

However, authorities were not far behind. Investigators were closely monitoring the restaurant's supply chain, tracing the sources of the drugs being trafficked through the pizzeria.

Police Crack Down: Three Arrested in Major Drug Bust

After weeks of investigation, a coordinated police operation involving 150 officers led to the arrest of three key suspects, including the 22-year-old leader of the drug trafficking operation. Authorities also raided a dozen homes and businesses connected to the criminal ring, uncovering further evidence of the illegal network.

During the raids, police found two cannabis plantations in nearby cities, Mönchengladbach and Solingen, which were supplying the operation. The bust marked the end of an extensive investigation that dismantled the criminal organization responsible for using the pizzeria as a front for drug trafficking.

Cannabis Legalization Amidst Drug Bust

The drug-related scandal came just as Germany began partial cannabis legalization on April 1, allowing the controlled sale and cultivation of cannabis for medical and personal use. However, the criminal activities linked to the Düsseldorf pizzeria highlighted the darker side of the cannabis market.

A report by Prohibition Partners predicts that Germany's medical marijuana sales will reach €420 million (\$260.66 million) by 2024, and could climb to €1 billion by 2028, reflecting the rapid growth of the legal cannabis industry in Europe's largest economy.

What began as an investigation into a popular pizzeria in Düsseldorf revealed a complex web of drug trafficking operations. With the arrest of the key figures behind the operation, authorities dismantled a major criminal ring. Yet, the case also sheds light on the challenges posed by drug trafficking networks, even as Germany moves toward a more regulated cannabis market.

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