Pizza Hut to Roll out Tiny Pies

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NEW YORK (AP) — Sick of pizza after the Super Bowl? Pizza Hut is hoping to tempt you with tiny new pies.

The chain is introducing "pizza sliders," which are smaller than its personal pies and can be ordered in batches for families that want to customize their orders with different toppings. The sliders will be available in either a $10 box of nine or a $5 box of three.

The box of nine sliders would be the equivalent of a large pie, which has eight slices and also costs $10.

A slider is 3.5 inches across, while a personal pie is 6 inches.

The roll out of the sliders right after the Super Bowl is intended to generate excitement during a time when people may be sick of pizza. The partying done during the final pro football game of the season makes the day one of the five biggest days for pizza consumption of the entire year. The other four are Halloween, the day before Thanksgiving, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, according to the trade magazine Pizza Today.

To combat pizza fatigue last year after the Super Bowl, Pizza Hut launched its $10 Dinner Box, which includes breadsticks and dessert and has helped grow sales over the past year.

Now the chain is looking for another big spark.

The sliders were inspired by a popular dish Pizza Hut offered in India called the "iPan," which were sold in batches of three. Pizza Hut thought the mini pizzas would translate well to the U.S., given the growing popularity of burger sliders at restaurants.

The pizza sliders let customers pick three different toppings for both the box of nine and box of three. Carrie Walsh, senior vice president of marketing for Pizza Hut, notes that the most customization people can usually get now is ordering a pie with different toppings on each half.

With the sliders, Walsh said people "don't have to worry about your mushrooms spilling over on my cheese side."

The sliders aren't the first time Pizza Hut looked overseas for inspiration; the Dinner Box was first introduced in Australia before it came to the United States.

Pizza Hut declined to say whether the sliders have higher profit margins than a

regular pie. In terms of how filling they are, Pizza Hut says each slider is roughly the equivalent of a slice, meaning a person might eat two or three. A pepperoni slider has about 260 calories, compared with 250 calories for a slice of a medium pie and 370 calories for a slice from a large pie.

The chain promised earlier that it would give away samples of a mysterious new product if the word "hut" was uttered during the Super Bowl, meaning the giveaway was virtually guaranteed. The chain says customers can get their free sliders between 4 pm and 7 pm Tuesday.

Pizza Hut in the U.S. has had a bumpy past few years, with customers pulling back on spending in recent years. To help grow its business and accommodate changing eating habits, the chain in 2009 introduced a smaller store format that focuses only on delivery and carry-out orders, with no tables for dine-in customers. About 40 percent of its 6,400 locations are now only carry out or delivery.

Pizza Hut is a unit of Yum Brands Inc., which is based in Louisville, Ky. and also owns Taco Bell and KFC.

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