

Sassak's grandmother, Cosamina Nuzzaci, opened the restaurant in 1952 in the basement of her home on 483 Knox Ave. When Nuzzaci died in 1964, her daughter, Mary Sassak – John's mother – took over the business. Mary Sassak ran the shop until her death in 2002.

After retiring from his job as a truck driver, John Sassak took over, making him the third generation of the family to operate Nuzzaci Pizza Shoppe.

"I feel bad about it," Sassak said. "We really couldn't tell anybody (we were closing). I would have had a line to the Charleroi-Monessen Bridge and back."

That's just an example of how popular the pizza was. During its two days of operation in recent months, most pizzas were pre-ordered. Sassak couldn't take walk-in customers.

Orders came from all over the country for the square, Sicilian-style pan pizza, and it would be shipped via FedEx.

"We would freeze the sauce, put the shell in a 2 ½ gallon baggie and put the cheese in containers," Sassak said.

"As long as they were willing to pay what it cost to go overnight – and it was expensive – we would mail it out."

Even though the business was only open two days, there were still many pizzas being made.

"We would go through 65 to 70 trays in two days," Sassak said.

"It was mainly cash and carry. You bring the cash, you can carry."

Many customers nicknamed the thick-crust pizza "sponge pizza" because of its soft texture.

"They said it was like biting into air," Sassak said.

There were only a few toppings available – pepperoni, mushrooms, anchovies, sausage and onions. And the pepperoni was placed underneath the cheese.

Sassak said he has heard from many people expressing their disappointment that he had to close.

One Facebook post stated, "When I think of high school memories, I think of Nuzzaci's! Sad day indeed my friend."

Another one said, "The best pizza. Great memories running to there at lunch to get their pizza."

Sassak said he has also heard from a couple people who feel he should make the recipe developed by his grandmother public.

Well, that's not going to happen.

One of the main reasons is the recipe calls for pizzas to be made in bulk.

"It would be hard to break it down just to make pizza for yourself and your family," Sassak said. "We make it in volume. "