

Pizza at Home

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Makes three roughly 12-13” pizzas

Note: The dough recipe and procedure is inspired by the Jeff Varasano recipe at <https://www.varasanos.com/PizzaRecipe.htm>.



Dough

Cultivate a sourdough culture. You can get starter from kingarthurfLOUR.com. Keep it in the frig and replenish weekly with equal parts flour and water according to their instructions. Feed the starter one day before using it and leave it out of the frig overnight.

Ingredient	Quantity by Weight (grams)	Quantity by % of Total Flour
Bread Flour (unbleached)	263	50
00-Pizza Flour	263	50
Filtered Water	352	67
Kosher or Sea Salt	18	3.5
Sourdough Culture	47	9
Instant Dry Yeast	0.92	0.175

Start making your dough two days before pizza day. Mix together the bread flour and 00-pizza flour. Put $\frac{3}{4}$ of the flour mix (394 gms) in the bowl of a stand mixer (I use the Kitchen Aid Professional HD) along with salt and yeast. Use the paddle attachment. Mix for 10 seconds. Stop the mixer. Add the sourdough starter and water. Mix at the second lowest setting until it looks smooth. Stop the mixer, remove the paddle (pushing mixture off the paddle into the bowl) and cover with a plate for 20 minutes. Now use the dough hook attachment. Run the mixer at the second lowest setting for 5 minutes. After 5 minutes gradually add the remaining flour mix. The dough hook will gradually pull in all the dough mixture. When all the mixture is balled up on the hook, continue running the mixer for another 2 minutes. The mixture will fall off the hook (no longer balled up). Stop the mixer and remove the hook. Cover for 20 minutes. Put the dough on your work surface and roll it around with a tiny amount of flour, forming it into a loaf. Put this in a lightly greased (olive oil) plastic container large enough to allow expansion of the dough. Leave it out for 10 minutes. Then put it in the refrigerator for two days.

On pizza day use a bench knife to cut the dough to create three 300 gm sections. Ball up each section. There are Youtube videos showing how to create the ball. Place each in a separate plastic container slightly greased with olive oil. The amount of time for the dough to be out of the refrigerator before use depends upon room temperature and the yeast strength of your sourdough. Varasano recommends a total dough rise of only 50% while many others suggest 100% or even more. I find 4 hours is usually right, giving me about a 75% rise.

Note 1: If you follow this recipe and procedure exactly, you'll have a stretchy dough. I stretch my 300 gm ball to at least 12” but sometimes 13”. There are Youtube videos showing how to stretch dough. Don't use a rolling pin.

Note 2: I have found this recipe works in both a kitchen oven and a high temperature outdoor pizza oven, though the texture will come out very different. In a kitchen oven I use a pizza steel and pre-heat at the highest possible temperature (usually 550 F) for an hour. In a home oven a pizza steel works better than a stone (Not in a high temperature pizza oven). If your oven has a hidden calibration feature you can use it to increase the temperature 35 degrees F higher than the numeric setting. In a pizza oven heat until the center of the stone is 850 F (use an infrared thermometer). An indoor bake will take around 5 minutes but watch it carefully. In a high temperature oven it could take as little as 90 seconds.

Note 3: The indoor pizza will come out closer in texture to a New York style than to a Neapolitan style. But New York pizza dough has oil, sugar and sometimes malt in the recipe which changes the texture. The outdoor pizza will have a texture similar to Neapolitan style. Real Neapolitan style follows very strict recipe and procedure rules. It does not use sourdough and has only 00 flour, salt, water and yeast.

Marinara Sauce

Sauce (enough for at least two pizzas)

- Drain a 28 ounce can of whole peeled tomatoes. Drain in a strainer and keep the liquid. Crush the tomatoes to squeeze the liquid out and drain in the strainer again. Keep the liquid.
- Put the tomatoes in a food processor.
- Add 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Add ground black pepper to taste
- Add 2 tsps. dried oregano
- Add 1 tsp. dried basil
- Add 1/4 teaspoon dried crushed rosemary
- Add a pinch of sugar
- Mix the ingredients. It will be a thick sauce. Add some of the strained liquid to it to make it a bit thinner (to your taste).
- Set aside the sauce and let stand several hours to let flavors blend. Do not cook.

Toppings

Mozzarella: Low moisture, whole milk Mozzarella works best in a home oven. I use Trader Joe brand. Don't use pre-shredded Mozzarella. It usually has additives which burn. Get bulk cheese and shred it yourself. I use 150 grams for a 12-13 inch pizza. Neapolitan style uses slices of Bufala mozzarella.

Pepperoni: I recommend Vermont brand.

Other toppings: Use whatever you like but be careful of wet ingredients. If I cook mushrooms to put on a pizza, I press them in paper towels to get out as much of the moisture as possible.

Preparing the Pizza

Stretch the dough on a floured smooth surface. Dust a wooden pizza peel with fine ground semolina. Transfer the stretched dough to the peel. The dough surface must feel dry before transferring. If it's wet it will stick to the peel. Spread the sauce on first. I use 1/2 cup for a 12-13 inch pizza. Then add cheese. Then add other toppings. Shake the peel to make sure the pizza isn't sticking. Launch and bake. I take the pizza out of the oven with a metal peel and then transfer it to a cutting board. Drip a little olive oil on the pizza. Slice and serve.