



The Best Ever Pizza From *Pizza* by James McNair

Basic Pizza Dough Ingredients -

- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 1 cup warm (110 degrees to 115 degrees) water
- 1 envelope (1/4 ounce) active dry yeast
- 3 · cups bread, semolina, or unbleached all-purpose flour, or a combination
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 · cup olive oil, preferably extra-virgin



Cornmeal Pizza Dough Variation Ingredients -

This is our favorite dough because it honors Peggy's Chicago upbringing. This variation is reminiscent of the crusts used in many versions of Chicago-style deep dish pizza; the crunch is appropriate with a wide variety of toppings.

- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- 1 cup warm (110 degrees to 115 degrees) water
- 1 envelope (1/4 ounce) active dry yeast
- 2 · cups unbleached all-purpose or semolina flour
- 1 cup yellow cornmeal or polenta (coarse cornmeal)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 · cup olive oil, preferably extra-virgin

Basic Dough Instructions -

In a small bowl, dissolve the sugar or honey (which "feeds" the yeast) in warm tap water that registers 110 degrees to 115 degrees. For temperature accuracy, insert an instant read thermometer in the water. Alternatively, learn to judge by touch; the water should be warm to your finger, but not too hot – the temperature of a comfortable bath. Water that is too hot will kill the yeast, while water that is too cold will not activate it. Sprinkle the yeast over the water and stir gently until it dissolves, about 1 minute. When yeast is mixed with the water at the proper temperature, smooth beige colored mixture results. (If the yeast clumps together and the water remain clear, discard the mixture and start over). Let stand in a warm spot until a thin layer of foam covers the surface, about 5 minutes, indicating that the yeast is effective. (Discard mixture and start over with a fresh package of yeast if bubbles have not formed within 5 minutes).

Combine the flour and cornmeal in a bowl and use the mixture as the flour in the directions that follow.

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The Best Ever Pizza continued

To mix and knead the dough in a heavy-duty standing mixer (our way) –

Combine 3 cups of the flour, the salt, yeast mixture, and oil in the large mixer bowl. Attach the flat beater, gradually turn on the machine to the medium speed, and beat until well mixed, about 1 minute. Replace the flat beater with the dough hook and knead at medium speed until the dough is smooth and elastic, about 5 minutes. Pinch off a piece of dough and feel it. If it is sticky, continue kneading while gradually adding just enough of the remaining 1 cup flour for the dough to lose its stickiness. If the dough is dry and crumbly, add warm water, a tablespoon at a time, until the dough is smooth and elastic. It is not necessary to knead additionally by hand.

Shape the dough into a ball and place it in a well-oiled bowl, turning to coat completely on all sides with oil. (This oiling of the dough prevents a hard surface from forming that would inhibit rising). Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap to prevent moisture loss, and set to rise in a draft-free warm place (75 degrees to 85 degrees - a hotter environment may kill the yeast) until doubled in bulk, about 45 minutes for quick rising yeast or 1 to 1 1/2 hours for regular yeast.

With your fist, punch the dough as soon as it has doubled in bulk to prevent over rising. Shape it into a ball, pressing out all the air bubbles. If you are using bread flour or semolina flour, turn the dough in an oiled bowl to coat once more, cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate it until puffy, from 35 minutes to 1 hour. Omit this step if using all-purpose flour.

If you cannot bake pizza within 2 hours after rising, punch the dough down again, turn it in an oiled bowl to coat once more, cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap, and refrigerate. (The dough can be punched down a total of 4 times and kept refrigerated up to 36 hours before the yeast is exhausted and the dough unusable.) Let chilled dough come to room temperature before proceeding.

To make a 15- to 16-inch pizza, keep the dough in a single ball. To make two, 12-inch round flat pizzas, two 10-inch calzones, two 9-inch deep-dish pizzas, or a double-crust 10-inch round stuffed flat pizza, divide the dough into 2 equal-sized balls. To make a stuffed deep-dish pizza, divide the dough into 2 pieces, one twice as large as the other. To make individual 8-inch flat pizzas or calzone, divide the dough into 4 to 6 equal-sized portions. To make 3-inch appetizer-sized pizzette or calzone, divide the dough into 18 equal-sized portions.

To Freeze – If you wish to freeze dough for later use, wrap the pieces tightly in plastic wrap or seal in airtight plastic containers and freeze for up to 4 months. Before using, thaw in the refrigerator for 1 to 2 days or for a few hours at room temperature.

Shape the dough into circles by one of the following methods.

To Shape by Hand into an Oiled Deep Dish Pizza Pan – Place a ball of dough in the pan and let it stand to soften for 10 minutes. Then flatten the dough with the heels of your hands and your fingertips to cover the bottom of the pan evenly. Pull the edge of the dough up the sides of the pan to form a 2-inch lip. Let the dough rise in the pan for about 20 minutes before filling and baking. For a thinner crust, fill and bake as quickly as possible. To form the top crust of a stuffed deep-dish pizza, see the following method for shaping a flat pizza.

To Shape Flat Pizza or Calzone with a Rolling Pin – Place a ball of dough on a lightly floured surface and dust the top of the dough lightly with flour. Using the heels of your hands, press the dough into a circle or other desired shape, then roll it out with a lightly floured rolling pin until it is about 1/4 inch thick, keeping the edges thicker than the center. While rolling the dough, pick it up and turn it over several times to stretch it. Continue to keep the outer edges thicker than the rest of the pizza and add a little flour to the surface of the dough whenever needed to keep it from sticking. Rest one hand near the edge of the dough round and use the other hand to push the dough against it to form a slight rim around the dough, working your way completely around the perimeter of the dough. Lay the dough round on a cornmeal-dusted pizza peel or a lightly oiled pizza screen. Fill and bake as quickly as possible. To form the top crust of a stuffed deep-dish pizza, use the rolling pin method just described, rolling the dough circle to fit inside the pan; omit forming the rim.



Chicago Style Deep Dish Pizza

From *Pizza* by James McNair

Serves 4 to 6 as a main course, 8 to 10 as a starter

Ingredients -

Basic Pizza Dough, Cornmeal Variation (previously outlined)

1 can (28 ounces) Italian plum tomatoes, seeded and drained

4 garlic cloves, minced or pressed

2 tablespoons minced fresh basil or oregano,

or 2 teaspoons dried basil or oregano

Salt

About 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

3 cups (about 12 ounces) shredded mozzarella cheese

12 ounces lean Italian sausages removed from casings and crumbled (If you are not going to make homemade Italian sausages than Costco's Italian Hot Sausage is very good)



Prepare Dough Instructions -

Prepare the dough and preheat the oven to 475 degrees F, as directed in the basic recipe cornmeal variation.

Prepare Sauce Instructions -

Crush the tomatoes in a bowl with your hands or a fork. Add the garlic, basil or oregano, and salt to taste. Reserve.

Prepare Crust Instructions -

Press the dough into a 15-inch deep dish pizza pan (or divide it in half and press each half into two 9-inch pans) as described in the basic recipe. Cover with plastic wrap and let the dough rise in a warm spot for about 20 minutes.

Prick the bottom every 1/2-inch with the tines of a fork. Bake for 4 minutes, then remove from the oven and lightly brush the crust with olive oil.

Create Pizza Instructions -

Spread the mozzarella cheese completely over the bottom of the crust, then spoon on the tomatoes. Sprinkle with the Parmesan cheese and top with the sausage. Drizzle evening with olive oil. Place on the bottom rack of the oven for 5 minutes, then move to a rack in the upper portion of the oven and bake until the crust is golden brown, the cheese is bubbly, and the sausage is cooked through, about 30 minutes. Remove from the pan to a cutting tray or board; lightly brush the crust with olive oil, slice, and serve immediately.

Wine Pairing Suggestion -

Lawrence Dunham Vineyards Petite Sirah or Sky Island Petite Sirah would pair beautifully with pizza. The richness of the wines can stand up to the highly seasoned pizza sauce and cut through the cheese. But we do understand that some people just have to have a beer with pizza, so we understand if you crack open a great beer to enjoy with your pizza.

