

Basic Pizza Dough

<http://userealbutter.com/2008/10/29/basic-pizza-dough-recipe/>

Original recipe taken from The Bread Baker's Apprentice by Peter Reinhart

Makes 6 pizza crusts, about 9-12 inches/23-30 cm in diameter.

4 1/2 cups all purpose flour, chilled
1 3/4 tps salt
1 tsp instant yeast
1/4 cup olive oil or vegetable oil (both optional, but it's better with)
1 3/4 cups water, ice cold (40° F/4.5° C)
1 tbsp sugar
cornmeal for dusting

day one

Mix together the flour, salt and instant yeast in a big bowl (or in the bowl of your stand mixer). Add the oil, sugar and cold water and mix well (with the help of a large wooden spoon or with the paddle attachment, on low speed) in order to form a sticky ball of dough. On a clean surface, knead for about 5-7 minutes, until the dough is smooth and the ingredients are homogeneously distributed. If it is too wet, add a little flour (not too much, though) and if it is too dry add 1 or 2 teaspoons extra water. [NOTE: If you are using an electric mixer, switch to the dough hook and mix on medium speed for the same amount of time. The dough should clear the sides of the bowl but stick to the bottom of the bowl. If the dough is too wet, sprinkle in a little more flour, so that it clears the sides. If, on the contrary, it clears the bottom of the bowl, dribble in a teaspoon or two of cold water. The finished dough should be springy, elastic, and sticky, not just tacky, and register 50°-55° F/10°-13° C.] Flour a work surface or counter. Line a jelly pan with baking paper/parchment. Lightly oil the paper. With the help of a metal or plastic dough scraper, cut the dough into 6 equal pieces (or larger if you want to make larger pizzas). [NOTE: To avoid the dough from sticking to the scraper, dip the scraper into water between cuts.] Sprinkle some flour over the dough. Make sure your hands are dry and then flour them. Gently round each piece into a ball. [NOTE: If the dough sticks to your hands, then dip your hands into the flour again.] Transfer the dough balls to the lined jelly pan and mist them generously with spray oil. Slip the pan into plastic bag or enclose in plastic food wrap. Put the pan into the refrigerator and let the dough rest overnight or for up to three days. [NOTE: You can store the dough balls in a zippered freezer bag if you want to save some of the dough for any future baking. In that case, pour some oil (a few tablespoons only) in a medium bowl and dip each dough ball into the oil, so that it is completely covered in oil. Then put each ball into a separate bag. Store the bags in the freezer for no longer than 3 months. The day before you plan to make pizza, remember to transfer the dough balls from the freezer to the refrigerator.]

day two

On the day you plan to eat pizza, exactly 2 hours before you make it, remove the

desired number of dough balls from the refrigerator. Dust the counter with flour and spray lightly with oil. Place the dough balls on a floured surface and sprinkle them with flour. Dust your hands with flour and delicately press the dough into disks about 1/2 inch/1.3 cm thick and 5 inches/12.7 cm in diameter. Sprinkle with flour and mist with oil. Loosely cover the dough rounds with plastic wrap and then allow to rest for 2 hours. At least 45 minutes before making the pizza, place a baking stone on the lower third of the oven. Preheat the oven as hot as possible (500° F/260° C). [NOTE: If you do not have a baking stone, then use the back of a jelly pan. Do not preheat the pan. Jen used a regular baking sheet, not the back of it.] Generously sprinkle the back of a jelly pan with semolina/durum flour or cornmeal. Flour your hands (palms, backs and knuckles). Take 1 piece of dough by lifting it with a pastry scraper. Lay the dough across your fists in a very delicate way and carefully stretch it by bouncing it in a circular motion on your hands, and by giving it a little stretch with each bounce. Once the dough has expanded outward, move to a full toss. [NOTE: Make only one pizza at a time.] During the tossing process, if the dough tends to stick to your hands, lay it down on the floured counter and re-flour your hands, then continue the tossing and shaping. In case you would be having trouble tossing the dough or if the dough never wants to expand and always springs back, let it rest for approximately 5-20 minutes in order for the gluten to relax fully, then try again. You can also resort to using a rolling pin, although it isn't as effective as the toss method. When the dough has the shape you want (about 9-12 inches/23-30 cm in diameter – for a 6 ounces/180g piece of dough), place it on the back of the jelly pan, making sure there is enough semolina/durum flour or cornmeal to allow it to slide and not stick to the pan. Lightly top it with sweet or savory toppings of your choice. Slide the garnished pizza onto the stone in the oven or bake directly on the jelly pan. Close the door and bake for about 5-8 minutes. [NOTE: After 2 minutes baking, take a peek. For an even baking, rotate 180°.] If the top gets done before the bottom, you will need to move the stone or jelly pane to a lower shelf before the next round. On the contrary, if the bottom crisps before the cheese caramelizes, then you will need to raise the stone or jelly. Take the pizza out of the oven and transfer it to a cutting board or your plate. In order to allow the cheese to set a little, wait 3-5 minutes before slicing or serving.