

# Pizza

*“You better cut the pizza in four pieces because I'm not hungry enough to eat six.” - Yogi Berra*

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## *Basil and Garlic Pesto Pizza*

Leslie Beribeault of Napa, California. Leslie and Alan Beribeault repeated trips to Tuscany have ruined them for life. Pizza must be thin crust and very Italian. This is a great pizza to go with a salad.

Set pizza stone on lowest shelf of the oven, remove other rack. Preheat oven to 500 F for ½ hour. (To use your outdoor grill as an effective pizza oven, see Using your Grill for Pizza on page 185.)

### Pesto

1 Large bunch of basil (large handful)  
4-5 Cloves of garlic (or more)  
½ Cup on pine nuts  
½ Cup grated Asiago cheese  
½ Cup Olive oil  
Salt to taste  
Pepper

### Pizza

Pizza dough (see recipe) rolled very thin on a piece of parchment paper larger than the pizza.  
Slices of provolone cheese

Combine and process pesto ingredients into a paste in a good processor. If not using right away, cover and refrigerate. Spread silver dollar coin size circles of pesto on pizza dough. Leave room for several round slices of provolone cheese on the top. I leave about an inch between the round of provolone and the rounds of pesto. Trim parchment paper to just slightly larger (½”) than pizza as if left too long it may burn at the edges. Personally, I don't pay too much attention if the paper burns a bit as it contributes a hint of smoke. Transfer pizza using a double wall cookie sheet as a batten and its parchment paper to baking stone on floor of gas oven or bottom rack of an electric oven.

Bake the pizza until crisp 7~8 minutes.

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## *Pizza Capriciosa*

Roasted tomatoes with garlic, to make the sauce are prepared ahead of time, even several days before. Set pizza stone on lowest shelf of the oven, remove other rack. Preheat oven to 500 F for ½ hour. (To use your outdoor grill as an effective pizza oven, see Using your Grill for Pizza on page 185.)

1 Large onions, thinly sliced  
3 Tablespoons olive oil  
2 Fire roasted red bell peppers, skinned, seeded and sliced  
Sourdough pizza dough (see page 184)  
1 Cup pureed oven roasted tomatoes with garlic (see recipe below)  
1 Cup grated buffalo mozzarella cheese  
6 Large organic free range brown eggs  
Salt  
Black pepper

### Garnish

Chopped chives

## *Pizza*

### **Oven Roasted Tomatoes with Garlic**

5 Plum tomatoes cut in half, and seeded.  
2 Cloves chopped garlic  
Drizzle with olive oil

Bake tomatoes in an open dish in the oven for 3 hours on 325 F. Remove from oven, cool a bit, then process into a tomato sauce with a blender or post blender.

## *Pizza*

Sauté the onions in 2 tablespoon olive oil until limp and transparent. Set aside.

Roll out an 8 inch individual sized pizza using a very thin crust on parchment paper. Place a cookie sheet under parchment paper so the pizza can be moved to the oven. Spread some tomato sauce on top of each pizza then some of the onion. Add fire roasted red bell pepper slices here and there. Cover with some mozzarella. Season with salt and pepper and drizzle with olive oil. Trim parchment paper to just slightly larger (½") than pizza as if left too long it may burn at the edges. Personally, I don't pay too much attention if the paper burns a bit as it contributes a hint of smoke. Cook pizzas on stone in the oven for about 9~12 minutes or until crust very crisp.

Meanwhile fry the eggs sunny side up and keep warm. Serve on the pizzas. Garnish with chopped chives.

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## *Margherita Pizza*

This pizza is the quintessential Italian pizza, a marvel of simplicity. This is a great pizza to go with a salad. Traditionally, this is an all vegetarian affair but I make mine with bits of anchovies. Ancient pizza came long before the discovery of the new world that brought us tomatoes and were simple fair topped with olive oil and herbs. Only the rich had plates, the idea of using bread as a plate came from the Greeks who ate flat round bread (plankuntos) baked with an assortment of toppings. Once you have tried pizza in Italy with its crisp thin crust, you are spoiled for life.

Set pizza stone on lowest shelf of the oven, remove other rack. Preheat oven to 500 F for ½ hour. (To use your outdoor grill as an effective pizza oven, see Using your Grill for Pizza on page 185.)

Although pizza dough is a traditional foundation it should not keep you from being extemporaneous in making pizza. Pizza may be made on a crust fashioned from a tube of biscuit dough from the deli section of the super market in a pinch. In this same section of the market, often you will find tubes of pizza dough as well.

Pizza dough (see page 184) rolled very thin on a piece of parchment paper  
1 Large bunch of fresh basil  
Fresh marinara sauce (see page 284)  
Grated mozzarella cheese  
Thin slices of ripe firm tomato  
Drizzle of great olive oil  
Anchovies (optional)  
Salt to taste  
Pepper

Because the pizza cooks so quickly, you must be frugal with the quantity of ingredients. Less is more in this case. When the crust is done the topping must also be done, hence be frugal with the quantity of toppings. Roll out an 8 inch individual sized pizza using a very thin crust on parchment paper. Place a cookie sheet under parchment paper so the pizza can be moved to the oven. Spread a tablespoon or more of tomato sauce on the top of the pizza. Add some Mozzarella cheese. Add a few thin slices of tomato. Add salt, grindings of pepper and drizzle with olive oil.

Trim parchment paper to just slightly larger (½") than pizza as if left too long it may burn at the edges. Personally, I don't pay too much attention if the paper burns a bit as it contributes a hint of smoke. Transfer pizza using a double wall cookie sheet as a batten. Stick the batten under the parchment paper and transfer the pizza to baking stone on floor of gas oven or bottom rack of an electric oven.

Bake the pizza until crisp 7~8 minutes. Cut the small pizza into wedges with a cleaver or rolling cutter.

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## *Pizza Marinara Napolitano*

This pizza is the quintessential pizza of Naples where pizza was purportedly born. Long pans of pizza are to be seen rushed by young boys along the back streets of Naples delivering the day's lunch. The people of Naples take their pizza serious and have formed a Verace Pizza Napoletana Association (VPN) to promote the culinary tradition of the Neapolitan pizza.

Unquestionably, if you ask someone from Naples about pizza they would say the Neapolitans invented it. The truth is plates were invented long after quick cooking flat breads were used to hold a few herbs and oil. No matter how you cut it, pizza is great food.

Set pizza stone on lowest shelf of the oven, remove other rack. Preheat oven to 500 F for ½ hour. (To use your outdoor grill as an effective pizza oven, see Using your Grill for Pizza on page 185.)

Pizza dough (see page 184) rolled very thin on a piece of parchment paper  
Fresh marinara sauce (see page 284)  
Slices of buffalo mozzarella cheese  
Thin slices of firm San Marzano tomatoes<sup>1</sup>  
Drizzle of great olive oil  
Anchovies (optional)  
Chopped oregano  
Fresh Basil Leaves  
Finely chopped garlic  
Salt to taste  
Pepper

Spread a tablespoon of tomato sauce on the top of the pizza. Add some slices of fresh buffalo mozzarella cheese. Add a few thin slices of tomato, chopped garlic, chopped anchovies, and chopped oregano. Press in basil leaves. Add salt, grindings of pepper and drizzle with olive oil.

Trim parchment paper to just slightly larger (½") than pizza as if left too long it may burn at the edges. Personally, I don't pay too much attention if the paper burns a bit as it contributes a hint of smoke. Transfer pizza using a double wall cookie sheet as a batten and its parchment paper to baking stone on floor of gas oven or bottom rack of an electric oven.

Bake the pizza until crisp 7~8 minutes or until very crisp crust. Cut the small pizza into quarters with a cleaver.

Notes:

1. See Marinara Sauce recipe (page 284) for more about San Marzano Tomatoes.

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## *Instant Pizza Dough*

The quickest way is to buy the dough and there are several sources:

- Frozen pizza dough
- Refrigerated in tubes in the deli-section of your store (Pillsbury)
- At the "You-Bake" pizza store

In an emergency, you can also make pizza on biscuit dough rolled thin. You can't make great pizza with this dough, but it is quick.

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## *Quick Pizza Dough, Fleischmann's*

1 ¾ - 2 ¼ cups of flour  
1 envelope Fleischmann's ® Pizza Yeast  
1 ½ teaspoons sugar

## *Pizza*

3/4 teaspoon salt  
2/3 cup of very warm water (120° to 130° F)  
2 tablespoons olive oil

Using the paddle attachment, combine 1 cup of the flour, yeast, sugar, and salt in your mixer bowl. On slow, mix in water and oil for 1 minutes. Increase speed to medium, blend 3 more minutes. Oil the mixing hook attachment, and switch to it. With mixer on low, add the remaining flour gradually until dough forms a ball. Add additional flour, until the dough is only slightly sticky. Knead on medium until the dough is smooth and elastic; about 5 minutes. Turn dough out on a lightly floured surface and roll into a ball. Flour your hands, and press dough in a pizza pan evenly to get a consistent thickness. Top as desired with pizza sauce, cheese and toppings.

Pre-heat oven to 425 F.

Bake in oven on bottom rack at 425° for 12 to 15 minutes until done.

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## *Sourdough Pizza Dough*

Sourdough starter is sold in packets and contains sourdough culture and unbleached, white flour. It contains lactobacillus type San Francisco, the bacterium that gives San Francisco sourdough its characteristic bite. You cannot use chlorinated water for this culture. If the temperature of your kitchen is hotter than 85 F your results will not be as expected and you're better off using SAF Red Instant yeast. Sourdough culture must be fresh (look at date code) and optimum performance is achieved between 40 and 75 F and the rate of doubling increases every 7 F. If you are making a sponge (note below), as the sponge becomes more acid, the yeast action becomes increasingly more retarded. Salt retards the growth hence it is omitted when making a sponge. The complex chemical and fermentation by-products produce a number of organic compounds accompanied by substantial physical and chemical changes contribute significantly to the flavor of the baked dough. The process takes time and the use of a sponge adds tremendous flavor and texture to the dough.

The perpetual sponge may have a permanent or semi-permanent home on your counter. I used to keep a glass jar with a vented lid (drilled a hole in it myself with a carbide bit) so I can keep a sponge going all the time as I may be impulsive about wanting to make dough at the drop of a hat. One day, the glass cracked so now I use a plastic jar. (It is much easier to drill holes in the plastic lid.) If you want to maintain a starter, start with the recipe for the sponge below. On a frequent if not daily basis, add ½ cup of flour and more water to feed the yeast. When the yeast is inactive, the surface of the sponge is smooth and covered by water; otherwise it is frothy with bubbles. If the jar is getting too full, empty some out or use some to make bread.

### Sponge

Use sourdough starter packet  
2 Tablespoons sugar in a small bowl  
½ Cup of rye flour<sup>8</sup>  
½ Cup King Arthur Artisan Organic All Purpose Flour  
Bottled drinking water

Add 1 cup bottled drinking water and mix to a runny consistency. Leave at room temperature for 24 hours, or if room is 65 F or less, leave covered with plastic wrap pricked several times with a toothpick on the counter for two nights. Carbon dioxide is forming during this process hence the toothpick holes. The following morning, allow the sponge to return to room temperature. If the surface has crusted, stir down and add water.

## **Pizza Dough**

Great pizza dough begins with great flour of character

1 ½ Cup of sponge<sup>1</sup>  
1 Tablespoons SAF Red Instant yeast  
Optionally, 2 tablespoons King Arthur Pizza Dough Flavor<sup>3</sup>  
1 Cup of King Arthur's Italian-Style Flour ("00" milled) (8.5% protein level) more as required  
3 Cup of King Arthur Artisan Organic All Purpose Flour<sup>2</sup>  
1 Plus 1 Teaspoons salt added at two times  
Bottled drinking water  
Great olive oil

Combine flours and mix well. Early in the morning, pour the sponge (1 ½ cups of it) into your work bowl. Add yeast, half the salt, 1 cup of flour and bottled drinking water until the mix is loose. Let this stand covered with a wet cloth for an hour.

Now stir in 3 cups of flour with the other half of the salt with a paddle or by hand until the dough is still a little sticky. This is moisture dependent. Adding more liquid allows more flour. The flour should be added a little at a time. Add a little more 00 flour if needed

Now hand-knead the dough or mix it with a dough hook setting the speed to low for about 10 minutes, or until the dough is somewhat smooth and elastic. If doing this with a mixer, do not add too much flour. The dough should be somewhat sticky else it will be too dry. If necessary, add back gradually a little water until the consistency is just right.

Coat the insides of a clean stainless steel or glass bowl with a film of olive oil. Now turn the dough in it to coat it all over. Now cover the bowl with plastic wrap or a wet towel and set it in a warm place to rise for an hour, or until it doubles in volume. You may place the bowl in the refrigerator overnight. The cold retards the whole operation but an extra day develops character. You pickup where you left off the previous day, once the dough has come back to room temperature.

When double in volume, punch down and knead until the dough is glossy and fully elastic<sup>6</sup>. Cover and let rise again to twice volume. Punch down the dough and divide it with a knife or scissors into four or six equal balls, depending on the size pizzas you are making. Roll out pizza very thin trying to keep the thickness uniform on parchment paper larger than pizza. You may stack the “blanks” on their parchment paper, one on top of another until ready to make pizza. Assemble pizza per recipe and trim parchment paper to just larger than the pizza. Place pizza and its parchment paper on cooking stone using a batten. Don't have a batten you say? A double walled cookie sheet is plenty stiff and will work fine as a batten. You also use the batten to retrieve the cooked pizza by sliding the parchment paper onto it.

### **Using Your Five Burner Outdoor Grill As A Pizza Oven.**

You need to have a working thermometer on the grill hood else you will be just guessing. Go down to the building supply and buy a 16 x 16 ceramic floor tile. If you want the real Italian wood burning hearth effect also buy a steel BBQ Wood Chip Smoking Box which is a steel box suitable for adding smoke flavor to your grill. Use applewood or pecan wood chips that have been soaked in water for an hour or two. Make sure your propane tank is full or have a spare on hand. Turn the grill on high and allow it to burn off any residues for 30 minutes. Place the 16 x 16 ceramic floor tile in the center of the grill. Your pizza stone will go on top of this and this will keep it clean and somewhat help spread the heat. Turn on the outer burners not immediately under the tile on high. These burners will stay on high. Turn the others to low or medium. Put the lid down. Allow the grill to stabilize. If it goes past 600 F turn down the middle burners to low. (It may be unwise to push you grill any hotter than 600 F unless it is made of heavy gauge metal.) If temperature too low, turn up the middle burners some. Put the smoke box on one of the grill ends that have the burners on high 15 minutes before your ready to cook pizza. If making a lot of pizza, leave the lid off on the smoke box in case you want to add more wood chips.

The prepared pizza is cooked on parchment paper<sup>5</sup>. After the pizza is prepared, I cut the excess paper away to just leave a border 1 inch larger than the pizza.

Pizza should be constructed thin in order to get a crisp crust. Don't overload the toppings - less is more. Thin crust and thin topping means everything is done at the same time. Thick crust and heavy toppings have to be cooked at a lower temperature (375 F) to allow time for the heat to do its work. That being said, the character achieved at high temperature is never present in a pizza cooked low and slow. A thin-crust pizza should take 5 to 12 minutes. It is fine if the top and bottom have dark spots.

Notes:

1. **Sponge:** Several days before you plan to make your dough, you need to make a sponge. A “sponge” is nothing more than a live bowl of warm, fermented flour batter in which the yeast has been allowed to multiply in profusion. When your sponge is bubbly, has a white froth, and it smells a little sour, it is ready to use. The longer you let the sponge sit, the sourer flavor you will get. The sour flavor comes from the build up of naturally fermented lactic acid.
2. Substitute flour alternatives:
  - a. King Arthur Sir Galahad Artisan Bread Flour -11.7 proteins, 0.48 ash from hard red winter wheat to produce traditional, more flavorful baked goods, hearth breads and pizza for artisan bakers. There are Gold Medal products from General Mills under than name of Harvest King (12.0% protein 0.52% ash) of 100% hard winter wheat but some bakers report it is good but not as good as KA.
  - b. 2 ½ cups King Arthur All purpose Flour plus ½ cup King Arthur Traditional Whole Wheat Flour
3. King Arthur (KA) Pizza Dough Flavor (product 1043) improves the flavor and aroma of the crust which features dried cheese, garlic, and natural flavors.

## *Pizza*

4. Baking stones or Pizza stones. A 14 by 16 inch is a popular size and may be had for under \$30. (A floor tile is around \$2.)
5. Parchment paper makes it easy to get the pizza off your batten when it to be cooked. One a pizza is cooked, it's rigid and easier to handle. Do not attempt to use tin-foil as the dough will stick to it after it is cooked. Getting it off is awkward at best. To skip parchment paper altogether, use flour to roll out the dough. Lift an edge of the rolled out dough and toss more flour under the side. Repeat with other side. Check the bottom is well coated with flour BEFORE you top it. Now load it onto the batten. Now build the pizza as usually. To dislodge the uncooked pizza onto the stone, hold the batten at a 45 toward the far end of the stone. Using your wrist, jerk the pizza until it starts to move. Follow the pizza with the batten and allow it to lay down on the stone. Getting the COOKED pizza off the stone is now easy as the pizza is now rigid.
6. Dough is fully elastic when the fully developed glutens allow you to stretch a piece thin enough to see daylight through it without the dough "window" tearing. If you're not there yet, keep kneading.
7. If you don't have time for a long yeast process to produce lactic acid, you may add King Arthur Instant Sourdough Flavor or simply add a small amount of vinegar and citric acid.
8. Substitute unbleached whole wheat for rye flour if necessary.