

Neapolitan-Style Pizza | Barely-Kneaded

Swick

Makes 3 to 4 pizzas | Active Time: 30 minutes | Total Time: 72 hours

Step 1: Making & Fermenting the Dough

- 500 grs (approx. 3 3/4 cups) high protein flour, preferably organic
- 24 grams (approx. 4 tsp) fine sea salt
- 1 gram (1/4 tsp) active dry yeast
- 350 grams (approx. 1 1/2 cups) water

To start the dough, add flour, salt, and yeast to a large bowl and whisk to combine the ingredients — then make a well in the center.

Next, slowly add in the water, and using a wooden spoon, stir to just form a shaggy mass of dough — there should be no dry flour stuck to the bottom of the bowl. At this point, you can actually cover and place the dough into the refrigerator to ferment; however, to ensure that there are no clumps of flour in the dough, we like to take it one small step further. Lightly flour the countertop and then using very lightly oiled hands — this will just prevent the dough from sticking to you — place the dough onto the countertop and knead for a few minutes. At this point, you are just looking to form a loose ball, you are not kneading the dough in the traditional sense to make it more elasticity or to develop gluten.

At this point, either transfer the dough to another container with a tight-fitting lid or leave it in the bowl and tightly cover it with plastic wrap and let rise at room temperature for 8 to 12 hours.

Then, place dough container in the refrigerator for at least 3 days, or even up to 7 days. This slow and cold ferment helps to develop even more flavor. Note that while this dough can be used the same day or even the next day, the longer it ferments, the more flavor is developed. Also, note that you can actually remove portions of the dough and let them ferment as you need them.

Step 2: Portioning & Forming the Dough Balls

After about 72 hours (or whenever you are planning to make pizza), it's time to portion the dough. To do this, lightly flour your countertop and then using a baking scraper or your hands, place the dough onto the countertop, and then cut the dough into 4 – 240 gram balls.

To form the dough balls, fold the dough under itself to form a seam and then rotate the dough 90° and then fold it again to form another seam — repeat this process about 20 times and then place the smooth side of the dough into the palm of your hand and somewhat aggressively pinch the seam closed. This helps to trap the carbon dioxide inside the ball of dough. If the dough seems way too sticky to form the balls, lightly flour your hands and continue.

Here is a good video on how to form the dough balls.

If you are making the pizzas that same night/day you can simply place the portioned dough balls onto a lightly floured baking tray — lightly flour the top of the dough and then cover the dough and let it proof for 2 to 3 hours to allow the gluten to relax before stretching it out.

For ease of use and because we rarely use all of the dough in one day, we like to place individual portions of dough into lightly oiled 2-cup round plastic containers (deli containers are good for this) so we can easily make individual pizzas whenever we want. Also, the round containers means the dough will stay round, which also makes stretching the dough out into a round pizza a bit easier. At this point, you can place the individual pizza doughs back into the refrigerator until you are ready to make pizza.

Note: If you are planning to freeze the dough, freeze it after about the 48-hour of proofing. Form it into balls and then freeze it. The pizza dough will keep for several weeks in the freezer. To thaw it, remove it from the freezer 2 days prior to making pizza and let it thaw in the refrigerator.

Step 3: Making the Pizza

For the best results, and ease of stretching, etc. bring the dough to approximately 75°F (24°C) before shaping it into a pizza. If using dough that has been refrigerated, this might mean taking the dough out about 2 to 3 hours before shaping it. Leave the dough out on the counter, covered with a slightly damp cloth.

To make a pizza, first, place the pizza steel/stone into a cold oven then preheat the oven to 500°F (260°C). Let the steel heat for at least 30 minutes before baking your first pizza. Note: If your oven or grill goes hotter than 500°F, go ahead and turn the heat up. Making pizza is a delicate process that can take time and practice to master and playing with the temperature is a huge part of the process.

Note: You can also bake the pizzas on the barbecue. Place the steel/stone onto the grates and slowly preheat your barbecue. Approximately 10 to 15 minutes before you are ready to make your first pizza, turn the barbecue up to the highest setting.

Place a piece of room temperature dough onto a very lightly floured counter. Alternatively, you can place the dough ball into a medium-sized bowl filled with flour and flip it to coat it in the flour — lift and gently pat the excess flour off of the dough. Transfer the dough to your work surface and gently stretch it into a circle, leaving the outer 1-inch edge slightly thicker than the center. Using your hands, press the dough into a flat round. Continue to press and turn the dough while stretching it. Once you have about an 8-inch circle, you can pick the dough up and slowly roll it around between your fingers as you stretch it. The weight of the dough will help to stretch it. If the dough starts to resist being stretched, put it down and let it rest for a few minutes and then try again. When done, you should have about a 10-inch circle of dough that is slightly thicker around the edges.

Sprinkle the peel with a bit of cornmeal and/or flour and then gently transfer the dough to the peel and proceed with your pizza recipe.

For the cheese, we like to use this plant-based Vegan Mozzarella — it's amazing!

Top with a Simple Tomato Sauce, and if desired some sliced Kalamata olives, a few thinly sliced mushrooms and some roasted or Confit Garlic. Once the pizza has cooked, top it with a few pieces of fresh basil and serve immediately.

Chef's Notes

Neapolitan-style pizza crust is best if it has a long fermentation period during. This allows the starches to break down into simpler sugars and the yeast will also have time to create flavorful by-products. The long slow fermentation also gives the gluten time to form which is what helps to stretch and also to create the rise of the dough while the pizza is cooking.

While this dough does take a few days to ferment, it is well worth it. You just need to plan ahead. For example, if you are thinking of having pizza on Friday night, then make the pizza Tuesday night and you will well on your way to a great dinner.

Whenever making dough or pastry, it's best to weigh the ingredients for optimal results. Being precise in your measurements will ensure consistency and success.

For a dough with a bit more texture and elasticity, try adding 1 tablespoon (15 grams) Bob's Red Mill vital wheat gluten.

As with many foods and dishes, Italian food is very regional, and so are Italian pizzas — in a BIG way. We like the results that this crust produces but feel free to experiment, we most certainly have over the years.

Cooking Pizza on Stovetop:

While cooking pizza in a wood oven or on a hot grill is ideal, it's not always possible. For those times when you really want pizza but you only have your stovetop to cook it on, here is how to do it.

1. Prepare the toppings and have them ready next to the stovetop (have everything cooked that needs to be cooked, like mushrooms, etc.).
2. Roll out the pizza dough into the size of your pan — (cast iron, stainless steel or even a nonstick pan will work).
3. Heat the pan over medium-high heat and then add a teaspoon or so of oil. Once the oil is hot, add the pizza dough and let cook for about approximately 2 to 3 minutes or until you see bigger bubbles start to form on the top of the crust. The bottom of the crust should also start to take on some color.
4. Flip the crust and add your toppings. If there are big air bubbles, you may want to pop them first before adding the toppings.
5. Cover the pizza with a lid and turn the heat down to medium and let cook for another 4 to 5 minutes, or until the cheese has melted and the bottom of the crust is golden brown. Adjust the heat to make sure the crust doesn't burn before it has time to cook through and the cheese has had time to melt.
6. OPTIONAL STEP: For a crispier pizza and with nicely melted cheese, the pizza can be placed under a preheated broiler for the last minute or so of baking.
7. Carefully, remove the pizza from pan, let rest for a second and then slice and serve.