

Homemade Pizza

If you don't have round pizza pans, you can certainly use rectangular baking sheets. Growing up, my mom didn't get round pizza pans until I was in my teens. To me, homemade pizza always came in square slices. She also used Kraft parmesan cheese, in the green can. Now I usually use freshly grated Parmesan, but every so often a sprinkle of the canned powdered cheese brings back a taste of childhood. I like to make my own sauce so I can control the salt and spices, but jarred sauce works just fine.

Dough:

Makes enough dough for 2 14-inch pizzas with medium thick crusts

3 cups white whole wheat flour (or all-purpose flour)
½ cup all-purpose flour (unbleached preferred)
1 package yeast (2 ¼ teaspoons)
2 teaspoons sugar
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon salt
1-1 ½ cups water, approximately

Put all ingredients except water in your largest bowl. Add 1 cup water and stir to combine. If there is still dry flour, add water, a couple of tablespoons at a time, until a very wet dough forms. You aren't looking for batter here, but a dough. It will be too soft to knead and look quite wet. Once everything is well combined, beat and mix the dough with your spoon or spatula for a minute or so. Cover dough with plastic wrap and put in the fridge or leave on the counter. If it is rising on the counter, you might need to stir the dough down every couple of hours if it is filling the bowl. Stir it a few times and re-cover. If it is in the fridge, just leave it to do its thing.

If your dough is in the refrigerator, remove it from the fridge and let it sit on the counter 30-60 minutes before you want to use it.

Pizza:

Sauce:

1-2 cups crushed tomatoes, low-sodium or no salt added, if possible
1-4 cloves garlic, diced
1-2 teaspoons brown sugar, packed
1-2 teaspoons dried basil
½-1 teaspoon dried oregano
paprika, few dashes
cayenne, few dashes
salt
pepper

Toppings:

½-¾ pound part skim mozzarella, grated
Pepperoni, green or red bell peppers, onions, mushrooms, black olives, etc.

Parmesan cheese, freshly grated or in a can

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Grease your pans fairly heavily. Sprinkle the surface of your dough heavily with flour, work a rubber spatula around the edges of the dough and try to work some flour down the sides of the bowl. Divide the dough in half with a spatula and scrape half on to each pan. Sprinkle each dough portion with flour and begin to press it out with your fingertips to cover the pan. Add more flour if it sticks to your hands. If one piece bounces back, move to the other pan and come back the first after the dough has a minute to relax. Try to get the dough to the outside edges of the pan, but you don't have to be perfect.

Mix together the sauce ingredients or use already prepared, jarred sauce. Spoon sauce on pressed out dough, using $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 cup per pizza. I don't usually measure it, but just dollop it on and then spread it gently with the back of the spoon.

Sprinkle the mozzarella cheese all over the pizzas. Add your toppings of choice. Sprinkle pizzas with the Parmesan cheese.

Place pans in oven, staggering them so they aren't right on top of each other, if they won't fit on one shelf. Bake for 12-15 minutes, then reduce the temperature to 350 degrees and continue cooking another 10-12 minutes, until cheese is browned and bottom of crusts are lightly browned (carefully lift up the edge of one with a spatula to see). If you are baking on two shelves, switch pizzas from top to bottom when you turn the temperature down.

Remove pizzas from oven and let rest for about 5 minutes so they can firm up. Cut and serve while hot.