

Cooking

Fresh find

Rice Ball, exclusively at Williams Sonoma, (\$29)
Eliminates the need for measuring water: Fill the metal ball with rice and suspend in a pot of simmering water using attached chain.



TOP CHEF



"Tuna ... is a perfect fish for the grill during the summertime."

— Liam M. LaCivita,
executive chef, Centro Italian Grill
in Bethesda

GRILLED RARE TUNA WITH PUGLIESE CAULIFLOWER SAUCE AND CIPOLLINE ONIONS IN 'AGRODOLCE'

4 6-ounce pieces of sushi grade tuna
For cauliflower sauce:

3 cups cauliflower florets
1/2 cup diced yellow onion
1 tsp. fresh chopped garlic
1 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes
4 cups chicken stock
1 tbsp. butter

For cipolline onions:
2 cups peeled pearl onions, fresh
1/2 cup sugar
1 cup red wine vinegar

1 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes

For roasted fingerling potatoes:
1 lb. yellow fingerling potatoes or small red bliss
2 tsp. chopped, fresh rosemary
salt and pepper to taste

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Slice potatoes lengthwise, toss in extra virgin olive oil with salt, pepper and rosemary; lay on baking sheet. Bake until golden and tender; about 30 min.

2. Sauté onions with a little olive oil over med. high heat. Add sugar and cook 2 mins. Add rosemary and pepper flakes. Deglaze pan with vinegar and 1 cup water. Cook onion until tender and syrup forms.

3. While potatoes are roasting, brown cauliflower in large sauté pan with olive oil. Add diced, yellow onions and cook until soft and clear. Add garlic and crushed red pepper; cook 1 min. Add chicken stock and cook 12 mins. until cauliflower is tender. Puree ingredients with the butter in a blender. Season to taste and adjust consistency of sauce with water.

4. Brush a little olive oil on tuna and season with salt and pepper. Grill until tuna is desired temperature — rare to med. rare. Slice tuna in half, lengthwise.

To plate: Spoon 3 ounces of cauliflower sauce on plate. Lay potatoes and top with tuna. Finish with cipolline onions and syrup. Garnish with fresh herbs and drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. Add sauteed spinach to this dish if desired. Serves 4.

— Gabrielle Shaughness



Broccoli and shaved parmesan cheese

Sun-dried tomatoes, feta cheese and fresh or dried rosemary leaves

Kalamata olives and Vidalia onion

The perfect pizza

BY SUE LYN SCHRAMM

Special to *The Examiner*

Pizza has become so taken for granted as a staple in the American diet that most of us rarely think about it. The mainstay of college parties, post-game gatherings and late nights at work is often little more than a vehicle for a thick layer of gooey, bland cheese and pepperoni.

It wasn't always this way. To have pizza in Italy is a revelation. There, a light, flavorful crust is the star, with fresh and highly varied toppings that change with the season and the region.

But you don't have to go to Italy to reclaim your pizza. With very modest effort, you can make pizza at home that's so good you'll throw away the phone number for Domino's and Pizza Hut.

Part of the secret: Pizza dough benefits tremendously from a long, slow rise.

That means you can mix the dough

on a Sunday afternoon when you have time, and then refrigerate it until later in the week. Because fresh pizza is cooked rapidly at high heat, you can enjoy it on a weeknight with little extra effort.

One to five days before you want the pizza, assemble the dough. This recipe makes enough dough for two medium pizzas or three small ones. Because measuring by volume can be imprecise, I usually use an inexpensive postal scale to measure quantities by weight. If you don't have a scale, use the volume measures I've given but be prepared to adjust to get the right texture for the dough.

BASIC PIZZA DOUGH

1lb. unbleached, all-purpose flour (3 1/2 to 4 cups)
2 tps salt
1/2 tsp yeast (I use instant yeast, which requires no proofing)
9 1/2 oz. water, at room temperature or slightly warm (use the ounce measure lines on your measuring cup)

That's it! Each time I make it I marvel that only four ingredients can produce such a sublime dish. No need to add olive oil or any other adulterations. The quantity of yeast may seem small, but remember you'll be giving the dough a long, slow rise, so 1/2 teaspoon is actually plenty.

Enough rhapsodizing. Here's what to do: If using instant yeast, there's no need to proof it. I just mix it in with the flour and salt before adding water. (If using active dry yeast, keep the same quantity but just take time to mix it with a few tablespoons of the water to let it foam up a bit before going on.)

Because I make pizza at least twice a month, I've come to rely on my food processor to mix the dough. I use the sharp blade (not the plastic "dough" blade), and simply leave the machine running for 45 seconds to a minute as I pour the water in through the opening

at the top. The dough rapidly comes together and forms a ball that slaps the side of the plastic bowl.

Once the 45 seconds are up, I pull the dough out and knead it on my lightly floured countertop just a few times to neaten it up into a round, springy ball. If you have no food processor, a heavy-duty mixer or just your hands can do the job. Knead the dough until it is firm and springs back when poked. That may take six to eight minutes of kneading by hand.

Once you have a firm round of dough that no longer sticks to your fingers, put it into a covered bowl or plastic container with a tightly fitting lid to rise on the counter for two and a half to three hours. Because of the small amount of yeast in this recipe, it won't actually double in that time, although it will grow in size somewhat.

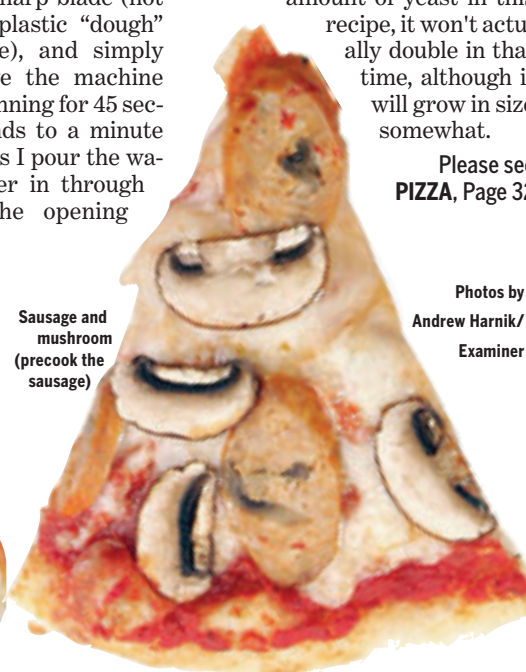
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Pepperoni



Thinly sliced fresh tomatoes, basil, sliced fresh mozzarella



Sausage and mushroom (precook the sausage)

Photos by Andrew Harnik/
Examiner

PIZZA, From Page 31

After time's up, put the container with the dough into the fridge. You can now relax until baking day.

I've been making pizza this way for years, and I've found that while you can pull the dough out to bake the next day, you'll be greatly rewarded if you show a bit of patience. Waiting three to five days before baking gives the dough a chance to ferment, developing all kinds of complex flavors and a wonderful chewy texture that's missing from the younger dough. Don't forget about it completely. If left longer than seven days in the fridge, the dough will soften into something like a sour-dough starter.

After the fermentation period, pull the dough out and divide it into two equal-sized balls for medium pizzas. I usually bake one immediately and freeze the second portion. Pizza dough can be frozen for up to a few months if tightly wrapped so it doesn't get freezer burn.

BAKING DOUGH

Toppings of your choice (see some suggestions below)

Large flat baking sheet or baker's peel

Pizza stone or baking tiles for oven

Wire rack for cooling

1. Take the dough from the refrigerator and flatten it into a disk. Cover with plastic wrap and let it rest on a lightly floured countertop while your oven heats up to 500 degrees. You can successfully bake on a heavy baking sheet, but your



Andrew Harnik/Examiner

Sue Lynn Schramm tosses pizza dough as she prepares to make homemade pizza.

pizza will be tremendously enhanced if you invest in a pizza stone or baking tiles for your oven. If using the stone, put it into a cold oven and preheat for 45 minutes to an hour so it's good and hot. This

ready to go: cheese, sauce, and whatever toppings you've chosen should be at hand.

3. Once your oven is hot and your dough has warmed to room temperature, pull the round of dough out to the

into a ball. If that happens, be patient. Let it rest again for a few minutes and then continue working with it.

4. When the pizza is stretched into shape, sprinkle your baking sheet or peel with a generous layer of cornmeal. The cornmeal is crucial because it keeps the dough from sticking to your baking sheet or peel, acting like ball bearings to help the dough slide into place on the stone. If your dough becomes stuck to the peel, your toppings could slide right off while the dough stubbornly remains put! Lay the dough on the cornmeal.

5. Spoon your sauce evenly over the dough, leaving at least an inch of dough at the edges uncovered. From this point, work quickly, as you don't want the dough to get soggy from the sauce before

FINDING CHEESE

After the crust, mozzarella is key to building a great pizza. Here are our favorite places to find fresh mozzarella.

A. Litteri, Inc.
202-544-0184
517-519 Morse Street, NE
Washington, D.C. 20002

The Italian Store
703-528-6266
3123 Lee Hwy
Arlington, VA 22201

helps make the crust brown properly on the bottom.

2. Gather your toppings and sauce, along with a measure of cornmeal. Once you begin to assemble the pizza, you'll want to work quickly, so make sure everything's

proper size. One good way to do this is to stretch it on the knuckles on the back of your hand. If it has fermented for several days, it will be fairly soft and easy to work with. If younger, it may resist shaping and try to spring back

BEYOND PEPPERONI

There are so many things that taste good on top of pizza that it's well worth experimenting to find out what tickles your fancy.

One important thing to keep in mind is how long various toppings take to cook. Since the pizza's only in the oven for about 10 minutes, some items may do best if pre-cooked a bit.

Broccoli's the best example — I microwave small florets in a covered container with a tablespoon of water for about three minutes before putting them on top of the pizza. That way they come out of the oven bright green and cooked through, not crunchy.

Here are some suggestions that work well over a light tomato sauce sprinkled with shredded mozzarella cheese.

Suggested topping combinations over a light tomato sauce:

■ Mixed mozzarella and feta cheese, sun-dried tomatoes, dried rosemary, kalamata olives

■ Fresh mozzarella, basil leaves (this is the classic Pizza Margherita of Italy)

■ Shredded mozzarella, pepperoni, thin slices of Vidalia onion

■ Shredded mozzarella, roasted red pepper, very thin slices of zucchini, parmesan

■ Roasted red pepper and slices of zucchini (slice zucchini very thinly or pizza will be soggy)

■ Broccoli and shaved parmesan cheese

— Sue Lynn Schramm

going into the oven. Layer your toppings over the sauce.

6. If using a baking stone or tiles, put the pizza directly onto this latent heat source. Open the oven door and transfer the pizza from the peel or baking sheet by jerking it quickly out from under the pizza. The dough will slide on the layer of cornmeal and be deposited onto the baking stone. If you aren't using stone or tile, just leave the pizza on the baking sheet and close the door quickly to retain the high heat.

7. Bake the pizza for 7 to 10 minutes, until the edges begin to turn brown and the pizza

looks done. Remove it from the oven using your baker's peel or sheet, and then transfer it to a wire rack to cool for five to 10 minutes before cutting. If you leave it on the baking sheet, the crust will turn soggy. Soggy crusts are the bane of home-delivered pizza — exactly the kind of thing we're trying to avoid!

Served with a green salad and a glass of wine, this makes a light supper good enough for company. Since homemade pizza is usually regarded as a high treat even if it doesn't require a lot of time in the kitchen, I often serve this when I have houseguests.

Slovenian embassy showcases dance, dessert

BY GABRIELLE SHAUGHNESS

Special to The Examiner

Visit any pastry shop in Slovenia, and your eyes will feast on displays of potica, a traditional cake served for festive occasions. Taking its name from the word *potica*, which means "something wrapped or rolled in," potica can be either savory or sweet.

"There are many different kinds," said Gregor Suc, press secretary at the Slovenian embassy. A popular variation is walnut potica with raisins. "The rich walnut filling is wrapped in tasty dough and sprinkled with caster sugar," Suc explains.

Slovenian wine and potica were served at a recent New York City reception hosted by Ambassador Samuel Zbogor in honor of Tadej Brdnik, the Slovenian principal dancer of the Martha

Graham Dance Company.

WALNUT POTICA

Dough:

2 1/2 cups warmed, fine-grain dry wheat flour
4 1/4 tbsp. fresh yeast
1 cup warm milk (depending on the quality of your flour; very fine-grain flour, which is very dry, requires a table spoon or two more)
7 tbsp. softened butter
3 egg yolks
7 tbsp. sugar
2 tbsp. dark rum
grated peel of 1 lemon
pinch of salt

Sift the flour into a bowl (cover and set in a warm place if the flour has not been warmed previously). In a large cup, mix yeast, 2 tbsp. warm milk and 1 tsp.

sugar. Set yeast mixture in a warm place and let rise to twice its original volume.

2. Combine softened butter, remaining sugar and egg yolks and beat until sugar is well dissolved and the mixture is frothy. Warm the milk; mix in salt, lemon peel, rum and the butter mixture.

3. Form the dough out of the warm flour, yeast and the milk mixture — the trick is to not pour in all the milk mixture at once: use 3/4 to start, then add more as needed. Beat the dough

vigorously with a wooden spoon until the dough is smooth and separates easily from the spoon and the bowl. Cover the bowl with a cloth and set in a warm place to rise to twice its size.

Walnut filling:

1 1/4 cup ground walnuts
1/2 cup boiling milk



Courtesy photo

Potica is a traditional cake served for festive Slovenian occasions.

2/3 cup sugar
2 tbsp. dry bread crumbs
2 tbsp. softened butter
3 tbsp. thick cream
2 egg yolks
1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/2 tsp. ground cloves
2 egg whites

1. Scald walnuts with

boiling milk. Remove from heat and mix in sugar, bread-crumbs, butter, cream, yolks, cinnamon and cloves. Beat egg-whites until stiff and fold into the mixture.

2. Roll out the dough to the thickness of your little finger (that's the tradi-

tional measure) and spread with chosen filling, leaving a 5-centimeter margin along the "last" edge. Roll the potica gently, making sure there are no air pockets left in the roll. Grease a round, toroidal mold (i.e., with a raised hole in the middle) and dust with bread crumbs. Potica rises, so make sure your mold is high. Transfer the potica into the dish, placing the seam on the bottom.

3. Cover the dish with cloth and set in a warm place to rise to twice its size before baking. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake potica for 1 hour; if the top starts to turn dark brown, cover with paper.

4. Baked potica should be removed from the dish immediately. Dust warm potica with vanilla-scented caster sugar and cover with cloth, but do not cut until completely cooled.