



Fond du Lac Public Library

Breads of the World: Italy

Presented 5/16/2017 by Shelley Armstrong and Sarah Newton

Two librarians face off with their favorite pizza crust recipes.

Shelley Armstrong describes her recipe as great tasting, easy to make and adaptable to thick or thin crusts. She bakes her crust on a regular pizza pan, not on a stone or steel.

Pizza Crust a la Shelley

Ingredients:

- 1 envelope active dry yeast
- 1½ teaspoons sugar
- ¾ cup warm water (about 110-120 degrees)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 to 2¼ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 Tablespoon vegetable shortening or spray

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Lightly grease pan or use parchment.
2. Sprinkle yeast and sugar over warm water in mixing bowl. Let stand 2 minutes.
3. Add salt and 1 cup flour to the water mixture and mix by hand or mixer using the dough hook.
4. Gradually add another 1 cup flour to form a stiff dough.
5. Turn out and knead for 3 to 5 minutes or in a mixer using a dough hook.
6. Spray or grease large bowl. Add dough and turn once to coat the top with grease.
7. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled, 30 minutes to an hour. Punch down and let rest for 10 minutes.
8. Press dough into pan, add toppings and bake 20-30 minutes, depending on thickness.

Rustic Pizza Crust a la Sarah

This recipe comes from a *Great British Bake-Off* runner-up. It's become my standard. It makes two medium-sized pizzas, but it's easily adjustable to scaling up or down.

Ingredients

300 grams bread flour (about 2¼ cups)

½ teaspoon salt

1 Tablespoon rapid-rise yeast (if using packets of yeast, just under a packet and a half)

1 teaspoon sugar

190 ml water (about halfway between ¾ and 1 cup)

1 Tablespoon olive oil, plus more to grease bowl

Semolina, cornmeal or all-purpose flour for dusting

Sauce and toppings of your choice

Directions

1. Arrange dry ingredients in a large bowl by mounding flour in center, sprinkling salt and sugar on opposite sides of the flour mound. Pour yeast over the sugar (salt can retard or kill yeast).
2. Add water and the 1 Tablespoon olive oil to the dry ingredients. Mix by hand until the flour comes away from the bowl. It should look dry and crumbly.
3. Dust clean countertop with flour. Tip the dough onto the counter and knead 5-10 minutes until all the dry ingredients are combined and the dough becomes a stretchy ball.
4. Your dough is ready to rise when it passes the windowpane test (see below).
5. Coat bowl or container with olive oil, place dough in bowl/container and cover with a clean tea towel or plastic wrap. Let rise until double, up to 1 hour, depending on room temperature. Dough is ready if when you poke it with a finger, the indent stays.
6. Punch down and cut dough in half.
7. Lay two pieces of parchment on a flat cookie sheet (no rims) or pizza peel. Sprinkle parchment with bit of semolina or cornmeal; this will give your crust a nice crunch when it is baked.
8. Preheat oven to 475 degrees.
9. On clean countertop dusted with flour, using a rolling pin or by hand, shape dough into two thin rounds, the thinner the better but sturdy enough to support toppings.
10. Lay dough on the parchment and let rest for 10 minutes.
11. Add toppings of choice.
12. Using the baking sheet or peel, slide pizzas into the oven with the parchment flat on the oven rack.
13. Bake 10 minutes, checking at 7 minutes or so. You'll want the dough a pretty golden brown and your cheese bubbling and darkening.

Notes:

- These pizzas bake quickly. If your toppings include fresh vegetables, dice them small and/or sauté them first to ensure even cooking.
- If using fresh spinach as a topping, arrange the leaves in a thin layer between the sauce and the cheese. They need the moisture of the sauce to cook.

Va-Va-Va Voom Pizza Crust a la Sarah

This recipe uses myriad herbs, a bit of spice and some tasty sharp cheeses to create a flavorful base for your pizza. It's easy to customize and change up. Makes one large or two smaller pizzas.

Ingredients for basic crust

2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
1 cup tepid water
1 packet yeast
2 Tablespoons olive oil, plus more for the bowl
Pinch of sugar
Pinch of salt

Flavorful add-ins (optional)

½ cup grated mozzarella and parmesan cheeses, combined
1-2 teaspoons dried basil
1-2 teaspoons dried oregano
1-2 teaspoons dried thyme
Garlic powder, to taste
Pinch red pepper flakes

Directions

1. Mix yeast and tepid water and let sit for 5 minutes at room temperature. The mixture should be slightly bubbly and cloudy. If no activity is present, yeast is no longer viable.
2. Mix flour, sugar and salt in a large bowl. Add water-yeast mixture and oil. Give it a quick stir. Before the dough forms, add herbs and cheeses of your choice. Mix by hand until it forms a ball. Dump the dough onto a floured work surface and knead for five minutes or so until a smooth, stretchy ball forms and dough passes the windowpane test (see below).
3. Coat large bowl or other large container with oil. Roll dough around in the bowl/container to coat. Cover and let rise until double. This dough takes longer to rise because it has more ingredients weighing down the dough. Be patient, and you'll be rewarded.
4. While dough is rising, select baking method:
 - a. Baked in a pan results in a soft, focaccia-like crust. Grease pan with olive oil, butter or spray.
 - b. Baked on a pizza stone creates a crisp bottom, especially if dough includes cheese. If using a pizza stone, preheat stone in the oven for at least 20 minutes (cold stones can crack if placed into a hot oven).
 - c. Or use my preferred method: Bake on parchment directly on oven rack.
5. Preheat oven to 475.
6. Once doubled, turn out dough on floured work surface. Divide if making two pizzas. Roll dough with a rolling pin and let rest for a few minutes.
7. Add toppings of your choice.
8. Bake for 7 minutes and check. Total baking time will depend on thickness of the crust and amount of toppings, but generally takes 10-15 minutes. Look for golden brown crust.

Note:

- This dough comes together easier than some recipes because it's a wetter dough. The addition of the cheese to the dough also keeps it slacker when baking.

Windowpane test:

Cut off a small piece of dough. Pinch two edges and pull them apart slightly. If the dough immediately tears, you haven't kneaded the dough enough. If the dough stretches, and light can come through the stretched dough, it's ready to rise.

