

A Little Homework

You can make good pizza at home. Here's how.

There is pizza dough in my refrigerator right now. I made it last night in about 20 minutes, 15 of which were spent reading a magazine while it rested. I'll bake it tomorrow night under mozzarella, then put a small arugula salad on top, my homage to the Green and White pizza available at Roberta's in Brooklyn.

Those who track the business say pizza is a \$40 billion industry in the United States, in no small part because 97 percent of us eat the stuff, most of us regularly. Most of that pizza comes from chain restaurants. A lot comes from independent operators with a few ovens. A fair amount of it comes from the frozen foods aisle. Very little is made at home, from scratch.

I am here to change that. I am here to say: You can make pizza at home that will be the equal of some of the best pizzas on the planet. Yes, your first attempts may be wan. But as anyone who has ever eaten a pizza out of a box in a hotel room far from home can tell you, even when pizza is bad, it is actually pretty good. And pretty good is an excellent place to begin.

Getting Started

The basics of pizza are simple. There is dough. There is topping. There is a hot oven. There is a surface in the oven on which you will cook the dough and the topping. There is a tool to transfer the uncooked pizza from your countertop to the oven, and to pull the finished pie from the oven.

The Dough

Homemade pizza starts with homemade dough. For the last few months I have been using the recipe developed by the team behind Roberta's, the Brooklyn restaurant that built its reputation on the merits of its pizzas. Anthony Falco, the laconic chef who was the restaurant's first pizza maker, says that on a good day Roberta's can serve around 2,500 pies.

ROBERTA'S PIZZA DOUGH

Time: 20 minutes, plus at least 3 hours' rising

Yield: 2 12-inch pizzas

153 grams 00 flour

153 grams all-purpose flour

8 grams fine sea salt

2 grams active dry yeast

4 grams extra-virgin olive oil

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine flours and salt.

2. In a small mixing bowl, stir together 200 milliliters (about 1 cup) lukewarm tap water, the yeast and the olive oil, then pour it into flour mixture. Knead until well combined, approximately 3 minutes, then let the mixture rest for 15 minutes.

3. Knead rested dough for 3 minutes. Cut into 2 equal pieces and shape each into a ball. Place on a heavily floured surface, cover with a dampened cloth, and let rest and rise for 3 to 4 hours at room temperature or



MELINA HAMMER FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A pizza like Roberta's Green and White pie can be whipped up at home.

for 8 to 24 hours in the refrigerator. (If you refrigerate the dough, remove it 30 to 45 minutes before you begin to shape it for pizza.)

How to Make a Pizza

Watching Falco encourage a mound of dough to become a pizza is entrancing. He starts with his fingertips, spreading the dough out from its center, gently, on a well-floured surface. He pushes down gently around the pie's perimeter, creating the edge. He picks up the dough and lightly passes it back and forth between his palms, rotating it each time, using gravity to help it stretch. At approximately 12 inches in diameter, Falco slides the round back and forth on the floured surface to make sure it doesn't stick.

Topping a pizza is tender work as well. For a plain pizza of tomato sauce, cheese and a few torn basil leaves, he applies only a couple of tablespoons of sauce. (For authentic Roberta's sauce, simply whiz together some drained canned tomatoes with a splash of olive oil and a pinch of salt.)

Then he adds a few chunks of mozzarella, the basil and a drizzle of olive oil, and puts the pizza in the oven. It is done when the edges are a beautiful golden brown, and the sauce and cheese are bubbling nicely.

SAM SIFTON

What to Drink With Pizza? Beer, Bubbly and More.

One thing never worth fretting about is what to drink with pizza. What could be bad?

Nothing (though, as with most foods, you may want to skip the heavily oaky, tannic wines). The Italians seem to prefer beer or cola. I think almost anything with bubbles is delicious. Dry Lambrusco is great. So is Champagne, believe it or not, especially with the green-and-white pies. I might try a rosé

Champagne with the margherita.

If you prefer red wine, fear not. Barbera, dolcetto, Chianti, aglianico, zinfandel, even beautiful old Barolo will be wonderful.

Whites, too, can go well with pizza. Don't believe me? Try a German kabinet-level riesling, just slightly sweet, and see if you don't love it. What to drink with pizza? Whatever you like. ERICASIMOV