

RECIPES

CRUST

There are numerous basic pizza crust recipes on the web. Some tips and ideas are:

1. Use Italian 00 or bread flour for a cracker crust, bread flour for a thin, crispy crust, or regular flour for a chewier crust.
2. Add flavorings to the mix if desired. Suggestions are 1 tablespoon of any of the following per pie: ground coarse black pepper; grated parmesan or asiago cheese; finely chopped chives; finely chopped thyme or rosemary; ½ teaspoon of vanilla
3. Brush a beaten egg or milk along the pie edge. Sprinkle with grated parmesan, asiago or fontina cheese.
4. Set the oven for as high as it will go for baking.
5. A pizza stone is usually suggested for the oven, but that means using a paddle to get the pie in and out. It's easier to just use a cast iron pizza pan, although a cookie sheet and silicon mat will work. Put any pan used in the oven as it heats up.
6. Sprinkle coarse cornmeal on the pan before putting the dough on it.
7. Prick the dough and put it in the oven for 5 minutes to develop a crispness on the bottom.
8. Take out the crust and prick any bubbles.
9. Spread on a thin layer of sauce; bake another 5 minutes before putting the rest of the sauce, cheese and toppings on.
10. The pizza is done when the sauce is bubbling and the cheese melted.

Or use any of the large variety of flatbreads, naans, or pizza shells on the market. Gluten free flatbreads are available. Follow product directions for cooking, or follow steps 4 and 5. For all options, follow with steps 3, 6, 7, 9 and 10.

TOPPINGS

1. Virtually any veggie is acceptable. Precook them just to exude some of the moisture unless you have an oven that goes to 600° or higher, or an outdoor oven that allows for flash cooking at 1,000° or higher.
2. Generally speaking, Italians don't combine cheese and shellfish, but suit yourself.

CHEESE

1. Fresh mozzarella or mozzarella di bufala Note: Both of these exude moisture. Take that into account when putting sauce on to avoid a watery product, or
2. Dried, part-skim mozzarella, or
3. A mixture of cheeses combined with mozzarella: provolone, parmesan, asiago

SAUCE

If you choose to use a store-bought pizza sauce, and there are many to choose from, cook it down for a few minutes to remove excess moisture. Or make one of these sauces:

STANDARD PIZZA SAUCE

4 tablespoon olive oil
1 cup chopped onion
6 cloves garlic, finely minced or pressed
1 28 oz. can San Marzano tomatoes, drained, tomatoes processed to smooth in a blender or food processor
½ cup tomato paste
2 teaspoons each dried basil and oregano, or
1 teaspoon each finely chopped fresh
1 teaspoon each fennel, thyme, basil and celery seed
1 large crushed or ground bay leaf
Salt and pepper to taste

1. Heat the oil.
2. Add the onion and cook, stirring until transparent.
3. Add the garlic and cook, stirring until soft.
4. Add the spices and cook until fragrant.
5. Add the rest of the ingredients; stir to mix; then cook until the sauce is fairly thick.

MARINARA PIZZA (OR PASTA) SAUCE

4 tablespoons olive oil
6 cloves garlic, finely minced or pressed
1 28 oz. can San Marzano tomatoes, drained and coarsely crushed
Up to 1/8 cup tomato paste, optional
½ teaspoon red pepper flakes, or to taste
Salt to taste
Juice from ½ to 1 lemon and ½ tablespoon white vinegar
(These are not traditional, but they add a nice bite)

1. Heat the olive oil.
2. Add garlic, stirring until soft
3. Add the tomatoes, pepper and salt.
4. Cook until the sauce has thickened. Add the tomato paste, vinegar and lemon juice if desired. (More salt may be needed, if these liquids are used.)
5. Add 1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil to Step 3, if using as a pasta sauce.