

# My Real NY Pizza Dough – Comfort du Jour

I went through a lot of trial and error to perfect our pizza at home. Over a period of two years, I pored over countless books and online articles, viewed more YouTube videos than I care to remember (one of them was narrated entirely in Italian and I could only learn by watching his hands move). I enjoyed small successes, a few near misses and more than enough total disasters that left me cursing like a sailor.

This pizza dough, says my dear husband, is as close as he's ever had to a real New York pie. And he should know.

If you're a sourdough nerd like me, follow the sourdough instructions, beginning with a "fed" 100% hydration starter. Otherwise, use a small portion of an envelope of instant dry yeast, and the flour and water measurements that accompany it. Before you begin either method, have a quick peek at the "tips for success" offered at the end.

## YEAST INGREDIENTS

2 1/2 cups bread flour or all-purpose flour (see slides for measuring tips)  
3/4 cup white whole wheat flour (look for King Arthur brand orange bag)  
1 cup + 2 Tbsp. cold filtered water  
1/2 tsp. instant dry yeast (or yeast marketed for pizza dough)  
1 tsp. sugar  
1 1/4 tsp. fine sea salt  
1 1/2 tsp. extra virgin olive oil

## YEAST INSTRUCTIONS

Combine all dry ingredients in a mixing bowl. Add cold water all at once and blend until all flour is incorporated and mixture becomes a cohesive mass. Drizzle the oil over the top, but don't mix it in yet. Cover and rest for about 20 minutes\*, then proceed to "next steps."

## SOURDOUGH INGREDIENTS

280g (approx. 2 1/4 cups) bread or all-purpose flour  
70g (approx. 2/3 cup) white whole wheat flour (King Arthur brand in orange bag)  
200g (just shy of 1 cup) cold filtered water  
100g (almost 1/2 cup) ripe sourdough starter (mine is 100% hydration)  
1 tsp. sugar  
1 1/4 tsp. fine sea salt  
1 1/2 tsp. extra virgin olive oil

## SOURDOUGH INSTRUCTIONS

Combine ripe starter and cold water in your mixing bowl until fully blended. Stir together dry ingredients in a separate bowl, and add them all at once to the bowl. Mix on low until all flour is incorporated and mixture becomes a cohesive mass. Drizzle the oil over the top but don't mix it in yet. Cover and rest for about 20 minutes\*, then proceed to "next steps."

## NEXT STEPS

After the 20 minute rest, switch to a dough hook (if using a stand mixer) or turn dough out onto a clean countertop (if you're kneading by hand) and work that dough. This step is crucial because it is here that the gluten will begin to develop. Gluten gets a bad rap these days, but it is the essential webbing that allows any bread to rise.

Knead for about 6 minutes (by mixer, or 8 minutes by hand), until you have a smooth, supple dough that is soft and tacky, but not sticky. If you pinch a small piece from the ball and stretch it between your fingers, you should be able to see the light through it. If it tears easily, knead a few more minutes until it reaches this point. If it's dry and dense, wet your hands and knead another minute. If it feels too sticky, knead in another tablespoon or two of flour.

Lightly flour your countertop and use a bench scraper or sharp knife to divide the dough into two equal pieces. Shape each into a ball by repeatedly tucking the edges under and turning the dough in quarter circles, then pinch the bottom to seal it into shape. When it's smooth and round, mist spray oil into a quart size zip top bag and slide the dough into it. Repeat with the other dough ball in a separate bag. Seal the bags, keeping a small amount of extra air inside.

Put the dough balls in a protected spot in your refrigerator (we pop it into the deli drawer) for at least 36 hours, and up to 72 hours before your pizza party. The longer the dough ferments in the cold environment, the more flavor it will develop.

On pizza day, remove the dough from the refrigerator about 2 hours ahead of your meal time. Follow instructions in the "Tips for Success" regarding pre-heating of the oven. While the dough is still cold, take it out of the bag and dust it generously with flour, then cover loosely with oiled plastic wrap or a clean dish towel. Preheat the oven and prep your toppings.

When the dough is room temperature, shape the first ball into a 14 inch circle.

Need help with the shaping? First of all, do not use a rolling pin! You worked hard for the air bubbles in the dough, so treat it gently. On a floured countertop, press your fingertips from the center of the dough to the outer edge, gradually making a "lip" all the way around. Rotate the dough a quarter turn as you go. Flatten and stretch the dough further by pressing your fingertips straight down across the dough. When it measures about 8 inches across, gently turn the dough over and repeat on the other side, taking care not to degas the dough too much. When the dough is 14" across, gently move it to a greased pizza pan or a floured and cornmeal-sprinkled pizza peel for transfer to the oven. Top as desired (see tips for ideas), then slide it into the oven (see tips for temperature advice) and praise yourself for making New York style pizza at home!

### TIPS

Never used “bleached” flour. I mean, for anything—not just this pizza dough. White flour has already been stripped of so many nutrients. Bleaching only makes it worse, and it also weakens the gluten, which will affect the outcome of your crust.

Different types of flour will behave differently. Whole wheat flour absorbs more water, so I’d recommend sticking with the portion listed in the recipe. After a few pizzas, when you are comfortable working the dough, sub in a higher ratio of whole wheat flour plus a little extra water that produces the consistency you expect. Sub in all whole wheat at once, and you’re likely to be disappointed.

This dough is for thin crust pizza, which means it does not “rise” after you shape it. Simply add sauce, toppings and bake. It will poof up in the oven, especially on the crust, but it will be crisp on the bottom.

Take it easy on the toppings. You should be able to see the dough through the sauce, and the sauce through your toppings. Your pie will be much more evenly cooked if it isn’t piled high with too many ingredients.

Dough can be placed directly onto a greased pizza pan or on a flour- and cornmeal-dusted peel for transfer to a preheated pizza stone or steel. The latter provides the best results, and a steel is well worth the investment.

If you’re using a stone or steel, you *must* pre-heat it the proper amount of time. This means set a timer for one hour, from the time your oven reaches the set temperature. These tools will absorb a great deal of heat, which will then be transferred back to your pizza. If you are making more than one pizza, give the stone or steel time to heat up again before baking subsequent pies.

For best results (at least, with this recipe), bake your pizza at 550° F, which is the max for most home ovens. To bake on a pan, place the rack in the center or bottom third. If using a pizza steel, set the rack about 8 inches from the top heating element. Some pizza stones have specific temperature limits, so please follow the manufacturer’s instructions for yours. I would hate for you to lose the whole game if your stone breaks under the heat.