

Hot Italian Sausage & Cherry Pepper Pizza – Comfort du Jour

From the shaping of the naturally leavened dough, the order of topping ingredients, the high-heat baking and the natural leavening of the pizza dough itself, my experience at Modern Apizza in New Haven, Connecticut left me feeling that I was doing something right—or, really, doing a lot of things right—in my efforts to make great pizza at home.

As always, I bake my pizzas on a pre-heated pizza steel at 550° F; get as close to this as you can with your home oven and enjoy the chewy but crispy crust that is signature to New Haven-style pizzas!

INGREDIENTS

1 ball [sourdough pizza dough](#)* (see notes)
2 hot Italian sausage links, casings removed
1/2 medium onion, chopped
About 1/3 cup pickled hot cherry peppers
1/3 cup pizza sauce
1 cup freshly shredded mozzarella*
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
A handful of [parm-romano blend](#) cheese
Extra virgin olive oil

*NOTES

Sourdough was the key to the great flavor we experienced at Modern Apizza, and it's my go-to pizza dough at home. My recipe is linked, and I recommend using a pizza steel and the hottest temperature your home oven can handle. My dough ferments in the refrigerator, but I bring it to almost-room temperature when I'm ready to shape and bake it.

Use firm, whole milk mozzarella for best results—and yes, you absolutely should shred it yourself rather than using pre-shredded, pre-bagged cheese. Pre-bagged cheese may be convenient but it is coated with a powdery substance that prevents clumping in the bag, which unfortunately for use on pizzas also prevents even melting. So please shred your own; it's worth it.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 550°F, with the oven rack positioned about 8 inches below the top element and a pizza steel in place for a solid hour at temperature.
2. Crumble up the Italian sausage and brown it in a cast iron skillet until some of the edges are just developing a crust. You want it to hang onto its moisture for the most part, as it will cook again in the oven. Add the onions to the skillet and cook until they are softened. Remove from heat; cool completely.
3. Drain the cherry peppers and pat them dry on layers of paper towel. Chop into bite-sized pieces.
4. When the oven is ready, shape the dough into a 14" round and transfer to a flour- and cornmeal-dusted pizza peel, which will make it easy to slide the pizza into the hot oven.
5. Swirl pizza sauce over the dough, then scatter parm-romano and mozzarella evenly. Arrange the cooked sausage and onions over the pizza and follow that with the cherry peppers.
6. Drizzle olive oil lightly over the toppings and quickly transfer the pizza to the hot oven for about 6 minutes, or until the cheese is hot and bubbly and the edges of the crust are browned and blistered.