

Neapolitan-style pizza



Craving Italian-style thin and crispy pizza? This sourdough pizza recipe from former Great British Bake Off contestant James Morton is topped with a simple tomato sauce, mozzarella and (optional for meat eaters) salami slices.

INGREDIENTS (MAKES 4 PIZZAS)

For the base:

- 100g white sourdough starter
 - 400g strong white flour (preferably Italian '00' pizza flour), plus extra for dusting
 - 7g table salt
 - 260g tepid water
 - Plenty of semolina, for dusting (flour will do, though)
- For the topping:
- 3 garlic cloves
 - 1tbsp good olive oil
 - 400g tomato passata (sauce)
 - Salt and freshly ground black pepper
 - 2 x 125g balls of mozzarella

METHOD

It's best to make your dough at least 24 hours before you plan to make pizza. The dough keeps for three to four days, at least, and I know those who always have a supply of sourdough pizza dough in the fridge, just in case. Make sure your starter is nice and healthy, and that the majority of it consists of white flour.

1 Make the dough. In a large bowl, weigh out your flour and add the

table salt. Mix these together to combine, then add the tepid water and starter. Use a wooden spoon to combine everything into a wet and sticky dough. Cover the bowl, then leave it for at least one hour at room temperature.

2 While you could mix this dough vigorously, we don't want to overdevelop the gluten. It should remain soft and sticky. I'd do a couple of stretches and folds, and watch it rise over about six to eight hours at room temperature. It should be very bubbly and sticky. At this point, cover with a plastic bag, put it in the fridge and leave it. It can be left for up to three to four days, albeit becoming slightly tangier each day. It's best used between 24 and 48 hours.

3 Before it's time to bake, get organised. Make your pizza sauce - peel and finely chop your garlic and place this in a pan with the oil. Gently infuse over the lowest heat



for five minutes (don't burn it). Add your passata, stir and turn up the heat to simmer. Add salt and pepper to taste. This can be prepared in advance and chilled, if you like. Chop your mozzarella into slices and place this in some kitchen paper (paper towels), or wrap in a cloth, to dry.

4 While some people like to pre-shape their pizza dough to make a very round disc, I'm a bit more rustic. Dust the work surface with plenty of semolina and a little flour, or just flour if you don't have any semolina. Turn your dough out on top, and then add more semolina

and flour again. Divide your dough using a scraper into four equal lumps, and coat each of these with semolina, too. It's not possible to use too much. Once your doughs are divided and your toppings are prepared, you can preheat your grill (broiler) as hot as it goes with the door as close to closed as possible, and then get a cast-iron pan or surface onto your hob (stovetop) to heat as hot as you dare.

5 Work quickly. Dust some semolina on a tray or peel. Take a piece of dough and stretch it flat. Don't use a rolling pin. Throwing the dough in the air and spinning it really does help. You want the centre of the dough almost translucent, and you should leave a 1cm-thick rim around the edge to give a good puff and stop the sauce leaking. Place this on your peel. Give the peel a good shake to make sure the dough isn't sticking. Add more semolina if it does. Spread some sauce on top, no more than three to four tablespoons, and then a quarter of your mozzarella and some slices of cured meat or salami, if you wish.

Add a few fresh basil leaves, if you like too.

6 Give it another shake to make sure it isn't stuck. Gently slide this onto your smoking hot pan. Use thick, thick oven gloves to move this under your grill, and shut the door (or close it as much as possible if your grill turns off when you shut it). Cook for two minutes, then check it. You want the edges of the crust to be just about blackening, and the cheese melted and bubbling but not browning. Keep going if it isn't. Lift up the edge to check underneath. If it's still soggy on the bottom but done on top, put it back on the hob for a minute or two. For the next pizza (if the first wasn't quite cooked underneath) you can leave it on the hob for up to a minute before placing under the grill.

7 Enjoy hot, as fresh as humanly possible. It takes the sacrifice of one person to make the family's pizza, but it's so worth it. Between each pizza, get your surface back on the hob to heat up to frightening levels again before you slide your next pizza on top.

● From Scratch: Sourdough and From Scratch: Brew by James Morton are published by Quadrille, priced £12