How to Make Authentic Neapolitan Pizza (Pizza Napoletana)

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By Erica WalkerPublished on: October 1, 2021Leave a Comment

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We journeyed to southern Italy to learn the art of making a true Neapolitan pizza. Here we will teach you all of the tips, tricks, and secrets to making the perfect pizza that we learned from the professional pizza chefs at the the Accadamia MedEATerranea in Naples.

Let’s Make A True Neapolitan Pizza

With the right tools, the right ingredients, and the right techniques, enjoying a true Neapolitan pizza in the U.S. is possible. Within a few weeks of getting home from our trip to Italy, I bought everything I needed and successfully duplicated the pizza I had made in Italy. Though it took several attempts practicing with the dough and experimenting with my pizza oven, I eventually got it down. I will try to be as clear and concise as possible so you can do it too!

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The Tools

First, you need the right tools. All of these should be easy to find at most restaurant supply stores and even easier to find online. Here’s what you need:

- **Pizza Oven** – Pizza ovens aren’t as difficult to find as you may think. You don’t need a big fancy built-in brick oven in your home to make a

Neapolitan pizza. You just need something that can get to a very high temperature (750 degrees F (400-degrees C) — yes, really that hot). Our Camp Chef Pizza Oven was perfect for this. When searching for a pizza oven online, just find one that has decent reviews and can get to high temps and you will be good. There's also electric pizza makers that can get pretty hot, you will just need to cook your pizza longer and you may not yield the exact same results.

- **Pizza Peel(s)** – This will help you get your pizza in and out of the oven. A MUST when working with a pizza oven. I like using a wooden one to get my pizza IN to the oven and a metal one to turn the pizza and to take it out of the oven.
- **Kitchen Scale** – If you want the perfect pizza, you need to be exact with your measurements.
- **Dough Bench Scraper** – Not absolutely necessary, it will just make your life easier. I use my dough scraper for cutting my dough and for cleaning up my flour/dough mess.

Getting The Right Ingredients

In Italy, finding the ingredients to make the perfect Neapolitan pizza is easy (and inexpensive). In the U.S… not so much. However, it can be done if you are willing to spend a little extra. In my opinion, if you are going to do it, you may as well do it right.

Tipo 00 Flour

For a true Neapolitan pizza you really do need the right flour. Regular bleached flour just isn't going to cut it. It will work for American-style pizza but if you want to make an Italian pizza you need to use the Italian flour. It really does make a difference. I ordered some Caputo flour on Amazon because it was cheaper than anything I could find in the specialty stores in my area.

Brewer’s Yeast

Fresh brewer’s yeast is what we used in Italy to make our pizzas. However, the right kind of brewer’s yeast is hard to come by here in the states. I did some research and found that dry, active baker’s yeast is a great substitute. The first time I made this pizza at home I used regular, dry yeast and it was fine but for my second attempt I used this Caputo baker’s yeast and the dough turned out much better. If you are able to use fresh brewer’s yeast, you will use double the amount (3g).

Fine Sea Salt

Fine sea salt will the easiest thing to find at your grocery store. It dissolves quickly and easily in your dough mixture and gives it a nice flavor.

Italian Tomatoes

True Italian tomatoes (or Pomodori Pelati) can be tricky to find in your local grocery store, but not impossible. There is so much to be said about Italian canned tomatoes that I wrote an ENTIRE post on it. It is super interesting to learn about so definitely give it a read if you have a minute. If not, just know your best bet is San Marzano tomatoes that have the official “DOP” (Denominazione di Origine Protetta) seal and serial number.

Olive Oil

Do yourself a favor and find a GOOD olive oil to drizzle over your pizza. Find an olive oil with the “DOP” seal and you will know it’s great, Italian quality.

Mozzarella

The best mozzarella to use, and the most traditional, is “mozzarella di bufala” or buffalo mozzarella. This is another thing that is quite difficult to find in the U.S. since fresh mozzarella is a very expensive thing to have imported. I found some buffalo mozzarella at a specialty grocery store called “Buf”. It isn’t imported but it is buffalo mozzarella. It is a little stronger than regular mozzarella which tastes amazing on pizza. If you can’t find buffalo mozzarella, any kind of quality, fresh mozzarella will work. Cheap “block” or “shredded” mozzarella is not a good substitution. It is much too dry.

Parmigiano Reggiano

Parmigiano reggiano is Parmesan cheese from the Parma region in Italy. That is how it gets its name. Most true parmigiano reggiano will be “DOP” and will work great. The age really won’t make a huge difference. You really don’t have to look too hard to find it at a grocery store. I found some excellent DOP parmigiano reggiano at Costco and it was very reasonably priced. This is great sprinkled right over the sauce of the pizza before adding the toppings.

Fresh Basil

Fresh basil is also another very easy thing to find. Basil from the garden is going to be the best (and cheapest), but any fresh regular basil you can find will work great.

How to Make Neapolitan Pizza Dough

Neapolitan pizza dough is traditionally made is only four ingredients: Flour, Water, Yeast, and Salt. That’s it. It doesn’t need anything else. As far as the method goes, we learned a unique way of making it at Accadamia MedEATerranea. The Mestro Pizzaiolo, Mimmo Onze, showed us how to make a flour “well” right on your countertop and pour the water into the middle. It looks like a big floury Crater Lake. You add the yeast and just start gently mixing it together. Then add the salt and keep adding in flour from the sides of the well until it all just kind of comes together. It’s ok if a little water leaks out, just try to keep it contained as best as you can until it is all combined.

How to Stretch the Dough

Stretching pizza dough is an art form and takes lots of practice. The nice thing about this dough is that it is very pliable and easy to stretch. Getting it perfect every time takes some time, and that's totally ok. There are a few different ways you can stretch dough. **This YouTube video** is easy to follow and explains how to do it well. As you can tell from my pictures, I don't have it perfect just yet. In fact, I'm not even really close but it still tastes really good and that's something. Right?

Neapolitan Pizza Sauce

If you have the right tomatoes, Neapolitan pizza sauce is EASY. You almost can't mess it up. All it takes is some DOP tomatoes or true, whole pomodori pelati, a little bit of olive oil, and a touch of salt. Nothing more, nothing less. No basil, no pepper flakes, no oregano, and absolutely no sugar.

The Secret to Perfect Pizza Sauce

Here’s the secret to making Neapolitan pizza sauce… and it actually makes things way easier… you DON’T COOK IT. In fact, you want those tomatoes so pure and uncooked that you don’t even want to use a blender any kind to crush them. Blending them will cook them too much. Here’s what you do: First, put the tomatoes in a bowl. Next, crush the tomatoes with your hands (yes, you read that right) or use a potato masher or ricer. Then, add the salt and olive oil and continue to crush. That’s your pizza tomato sauce. It’s a beautiful thing.

Margherita Style Pizza

The most traditional kind of Neapolitan pizza is the pizza Margherita. You may know the story of how Raffaele Esposito created this pizza for Queen Margherita of Savoy. He created three different kinds of pizza for her but she particularly appreciated the tricolor one with mozzarella, tomato, and basil (the colors of the Italian flag). To this day it is the most popular and well loved style of pizza in Italy.

More Optional Topping Ideas:

As mentioned before, Neapolitan pizza is more of a technique or method of making pizza rather than a specific kind of pizza. For example, a Neapolitan pizza can be made with sausage and friarielli (a kind of Italian broccoli) and still be considered “Neapolitan”. With that being said, here are some more topping ideas to add to your pizza:

- sausage
- prosciutto (or Parma ham)
- garlic
- peppers
- olives
- mushrooms
- truffle
- eggplant
- cheese: mozzarella, parmesan, pecorino or burrata
- Or you can make your own creations with just about anything you want!

Cooking Time and Temp

Another thing that sets Neapolitan pizza apart is how quickly it cooks. These pizzas cook FAST and at a very high temperature. You want to cook these at 750 degrees F (400 degrees C) for just 60 seconds or so. The crust is THIN and will cook quickly. Keep a very close eye on it while it is in the oven so you can see exactly when to take it out.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I substitute X for Y?
For this recipe, try not to swap out ingredients if you can. For every thing you swap out, it will reduce the quality and authenticity. If your goal is to make a real Neapolitan pizza it is worth it to do it the right way with the right ingredients.

Can I just use my regular oven?
Most likely your regular oven won't get as hot as it needs to be. If you absolutely can not use a pizza oven or a pizza maker that gets to 750 degrees-F, you can use a pizza stone in your regular oven and heat it as high as you can. You may need to cook it a little longer and it might not quite be the same but you can get close. Be sure to follow the instructions that come with your pizza stone very carefully or you could risk breaking it.

Where did you guys stay in Naples? How was it?
We stayed at the Hotel San Francesco al Monte and it was FANTASTIC. Probably the most unique place I have ever stayed. It is an old monastery that was built into the side of a hill and turned into a hotel. The rooms are gorgeous and parts of the hotel are actually underground! It has an incredible view of Naples and I would 100% stay there again in a heartbeat.

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We went all the way to Italy to learn the art of making a true Neapolitan pizza. Here we will share with you everything we learned and MORE!

Prep Time: 10 minutes
Cook Time: 10 minutes
Refrigeration time: 1 day
Total: 1 day 20 minutes
Serves: 10

Ingredients

Neapolitan Pizza Dough

- 800 g flour "00" (Caputo Classico, Chef's, or Pizzeria flour will work great)
- 500 ml cool water

- 28 g fine sea salt
- 1.5 g baker's yeast (traditionally you will want 3g of active fresh Brewer's yeast but that is difficult to come by)
- corn meal optional and to taste, to prevent pizza from sticking to pizza peel (see notes above)

For The Neapolitan Pizza Sauce and Toppings

- 1 can (28oz) DOP San Marzano Whole Canned Tomatoes (Pomodori Pelati)
- 1/2 teaspoon olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- parmigiano reggiano grated, to taste
- 1 pound buffalo mozzarella (mozzarella di bufala) or fresh mozzarella will work fine
- fresh basil leaves to taste
- olive oil to taste

Instructions

For the Dough:

1. On a wooden or marble work surface, shape the flour into a large well. Pour water into the center of the well and sprinkle the yeast over the top.

2. Start mixing the flour into the middle little by little into the water. When the water starts looking a little milky, add the salt.

3. Continue working the flour into the water until it becomes doughy.

4. Knead the dough vigorously with your hands for 15-20 minutes, adding a bit of water of flour if necessary, until the dough is soft and smooth. Once you have the right consistency, shape the dough into a ball and cover with a plastic bowl so the dough is protected from the air (you can also place the dough IN the bowl and cover with a lightly damp towel or plastic wrap) and allow to rise 4-5 hours at room temperature. For the best results, cover and refrigerate overnight.

5. Cut dough into 5 equal pieces (appx. 250g each) and shape into balls. Place balls in a deep baking dish or pan so they aren't touching and cover with plastic wrap that has been sprayed with cooking spray (or a kitchen towel) so the dough balls don't try out. Allow to rise another 4-5 hours at room temperature.

6. Preheat your pizza oven to 750-degrees F (400-degrees C). Working with one pizza at a time, stretch out pizza dough on a floured surface until about 11-12" in diameter. This may take some practice to get perfect. See notes above.

7. Rub a little corn meal and flour or your pizza peel and place dough over the top of the pizza peel. Working quickly so the dough doesn't stick to the peel, spread on your sauce and add the toppings (see below).

8. Place your pizza in your preheated pizza oven and bake for 60-90 seconds, turning a few times throughout the process for even heating. When crust is golden brown with a few dark spots, remove quickly (see above for more cooking tips).

For The Sauce:

1. Place tomatoes in a large bowl and crush with your hands, a potato masher, or a potato ricer. Do not use a blender or immersion blender as these can cook your tomatoes. Add olive oil and salt and continue to crush the tomatoes. When tomatoes are fully crushed, you have your perfect pizza sauce!

Equipment

- Pizza Oven
- Pizza Peel
- Kitchen Scale

Nutrition

Calories: 430kcal | Carbohydrates: 62g | Protein: 18g | Fat: 11g | Saturated Fat: 6g | Polyunsaturated Fat: 1g | Monounsaturated Fat: 3g | Cholesterol: 36mg | Sodium: 1432mg | Potassium: 122mg | Fiber: 2g | Sugar: 1g | Vitamin A: 307IU | Vitamin C: 1mg | Calcium: 243mg | Iron: 4mg
Course: Main Course
Cuisine: Italian
Neapolitan Pizza
Recipe by: Erica Walker

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