

Authentic Chicago-style Pizza

Here is the recipe that will get you an authentic Chicago-style deep-dish pizza. This is great, and it isn't rocket science. If you stick to the spirit of the recipe (mainly a "more is almost always better" ethic) you can't really screw this up. I'm not much of a chef, but these pizzas are fabulous!



Tools

- Various measuring cups and spoons
- Cheese grater
- Large bowls for mixing
- Electric Mixer
- Utensils
- 14" deep-dish pizza pan or two 9" springform cake pans

Make the Crust

- 4 cups of flour (unbleached is best)
- 3-4 tablespoons of yellow corn meal
- 2 ½ - 3 teaspoons of yeast
- 2 teaspoons of salt
- 4-5 tablespoons of melted, unsalted butter
- 4 tablespoons of oil (half olive oil and half vegetable oil works well)
- 1 1/8 cup of warm water

Measure and mix all the dry ingredients first. Then add the butter and oil. Add the water last. Then mix. I use a Kitchen Aid mixer on the second lowest setting for about 8-10 minutes. When it is done mixing, you'll have a ball of pizza dough. Cover the bowl with a clean towel and set it aside for at least an hour. You can leave it overnight if you like. Sometimes I'll put a little olive oil in the bottom of the bowl.

Make the Sauce

- 28-ounce can of diced or lightly crushed tomatoes (I like Muir Glen)
- 6-ounce can of tomato paste
- Lots of Italian seasonings (most grocery stores carry a pre-made mix)

I mix this stuff up and set it aside. Some recipes tell you to drain the tomatoes. Instead, I add the tomato paste to thicken things up a bit. Why? More sauce!

You can experiment with the seasonings, but my rule of thumb is to add as much Italian seasoning as I can get away with before my wife gives me a look that says, "What on Earth are you doing?" Sometimes I will also add a little crushed red pepper to give it more zing, but the "more is always better" ethic doesn't really apply to that. Some people add a few spoons brown sugar. I think that's OK too. It is all about what you like. Different pizzerias have different recipes.

Once mixed, set the sauce aside.

Other Possible Ingredients

- 20-24 ounces of shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 ¼ cup of shredded Parmesan or Asiago cheese (I like using some of both)
- Canned sliced mushrooms and/or sliced black olives
- 1 pound of hot/spicy Italian pork sausage (fully cooked)
- Thin slices of fresh tomato
- Fresh garlic cloves
- Spinach (lightly sautéed to remove some of the moisture)

Cheese is the only mandatory thing here. Pizza is basically crust, sauce, and cheese. However, *no pineapple or broccoli is allowed*. We're making a Chicago-style pizza. I've got a lot of love for Hawaii and California, but this is not their game.

People have strong opinions about what exact tomatoes or cheese you should use. I don't. Every pizzeria has its own recipe. Use what you like. Use what tastes good.



Build a Pizza

- Pre-heat your oven to 430 degrees.
- Throw some more yellow cornmeal and a bit of olive oil in your pan and spread it around. Part of the crust's charm is the gritty cornmeal at its base, and it helps to keep the crust from sticking. A couple tablespoons of each ought to do it.

- Place your dough ball in the center of the pan and begin working it outward until it fills the pan. Shape it like a piecrust along the rim of your pizza pan.
- Bake the crust for 10-12 minutes. It will be lightly browned and puffy when you pull it out of the oven. Take oven mittens (clean!) and firmly press the crust back down so that it isn't so puffy.
- Spread the mozzarella cheese over the crust.
- Spread any mushrooms, spinach, or sausage on top of the mozzarella.
- Spread the sauce.
- Scatter any olives, tomato slices, or garlic across the sauce.
- Spread the Asiago or Parmesan cheese.

Once assembled, I like to drizzle a couple tablespoons of marinara sauce and/or olive oil across the top of the pizza. I also might add some more oregano and/or Italian seasonings.

Bake the pizza another 25-30 minutes at 430 degrees. Serve it hot and eat with a fork and knife. Then make changes to this recipe as you see fit.

Throughout the pandemic, I have been making pizzas every few weeks and delivering them to friends — just trying to spread a little joy. A whole pizza can be reheated in the oven at 400-425 degrees for 10-12 minutes. (It's OK to reheat your slice in the microwave, but the crust will lose most of its crispiness.)

I think Chicago-style pizza is best served with cold RC Cola or a lighter lager beer. A nice green salad also goes well with it. My celebratory music of choice would be some Chicago blues by Buddy Guy or Junior Wells. Finally, you might want to watch some Youtube highlight reels of Walter Payton while you eat. Enjoy!

~ Chuck

