

# How to Shape Your Dough



## General Tips

- Be SURE to start with a well kneaded dough that, ideally, has rested and risen at least a half hour after kneading.
- Sprinkle LOTS of flour on the surface you plan to shape your dough on.
- If your dough springs back quickly after shaping or stretching, let it rest for about 5 minutes before trying again.



Shaping



Start by shaping your mass of dough into a ball by pulling the sides of the dough down and under itself. The top of the ball that begins to form will develop a tight, smooth surface.



Dust your work surface generously with flour, and place the dough on this surface. Then press the dough ball down in the center gently, flattening the inner portion while leaving a ridge around the circumference that will eventually become the crust. Continue to press and stretch the dough on the work surface until you have a relatively thin middle, a defined crust, and a (more or less) circular shape.



If you wish to enlarge your dough further, gently pick up the disc with the outside of your hands, placing the outer side of your knuckles right at the edge of where the outer crust meets the inner flat part of the dough. Stretch your dough circle gently by pulling outward with your knuckles, rotating the dough a few inches, and repeating again until you achieve the size and shape you wish.

# Cheese Blending

Courtesy of Cheese Chef, John Esser  
www.cheesechefjohn.com



Creating a unique blend of cheeses is an excellent way to create a flavor profile that will make your pizza really stand out! Since different cheeses react in different ways during the cooking process, it is important to understand how to select the cheeses in your blend. The chart below offers a simple way to understand this concept.

- Cheeses in the left column will have less melt and flow and more browning. If your cheese blend uses only cheeses from this column, your pie will be too dry and brown too fast.
- Cheeses in the right column have more melt and flow and less browning. Using only cheeses from this column will result in a pie that takes too long to brown and be overly runny with too much moisture.

It is suggested to choose either Low-Moisture Part-Skim Mozzarella or Whole Milk Mozzarella as your primary base, and then select cheeses from both columns to create your desired blend.

Lower moisture, lower fat, or both – resulting in more browning and less melt and flow	Higher moisture, higher fat, or both – resulting in less browning and more melt and flow
<b>Low-Moisture Part-Skim Mozzarella (LMPS)</b> Parmesan Asiago Romano Aged Provolone Aged Gouda Swiss Edam	<b>Whole Milk Mozzarella</b> Monterey Jack Havarti Fontina Mild Provolone Mild Gouda Baby Swiss Blue

*You may notice that Cheddar is missing from the chart. It can be in either column, depending on age. Mild Cheddar would fit on the right side, however it firms up quickly when cooled. Aged Cheddar could be on the left side, but because of protein breakdown after a year of age, it will melt and flow more than other drier cheese. It is best to keep the percentage under 10% and increase as needed after testing.*

Blend Example with Low-Moisture Part-Skim Mozzarella	Blend Example with Whole Milk Mozzarella
75% LMPS Mozzarella 20% Mild Provolone 5% Aged Provolone  This blend, that is perfect for a red sauce, will brown nicely and punch up the flavor profile with the addition of only five percent Aged Provolone.	40% Whole Milk Mozzarella 20% Fontina 25% LMPS Mozzarella 15% Asiago  This blend, that is perfect for a white sauce, enjoys the addition of creamy fontina and is balanced by the LMPS Mozzarella and Asiago.

# Toppings



## Rule #1: Less Is More!

Named after the Italian city of Naples where modern pizza was invented, traditional Neapolitan style pizza uses few toppings. Ingredients are chosen carefully to complement each other.



## General Guidelines for Toppings

- Start with only a tablespoon or two of sauce and spread it thinly and evenly, avoiding the outer edges of the dough
- Sprinkle grated cheese lightly over the sauce and/or place small hunks or dollops of fresh/soft cheese (fresh mozz, ricotta, paneer) strategically around the pie for balance
- Slice meat and vegetable toppings thin and use sparingly - too many or too much will weigh down your pizza and keep the center from cooking through
- Top with fresh herbs and glazes AFTER baking to avoid burnt ingredients and soggy pizza
- Grate fresh parmesan over a fully cooked pie for a fresh, tangy complement or drizzle spiced honey around the edge of the crust for a sweet/hot finish

## Classic Topping Combinations



**Margherita** - tomato sauce or fresh tomatoes, fresh mozzarella, fresh basil



**Prosciutto e Funghi** - tomato sauce, prosciutto, mushrooms, mozzarella



**Capricciosa** - tomato sauce, artichokes, mushrooms, black olives, ham

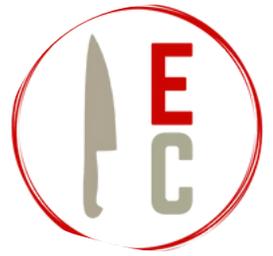


**Quattro Formaggi** - fresh mozzarella, gorgonzola, fontina, and either pecorino romano, grana padano, stracchino or parmesan



**Marinara** - tomato sauce, sliced garlic, fresh oregano

## How Will You Bake Your Pizza?



Home Pizza Oven



So you have one of these, eh? You should be teaching this class!

Home pizza ovens like Roccbox and Ooni are the best way to get yourself a home-made, Neapolitan style pizza without building yourself a \$5,000 wood fired pizza oven. Safe, reliable, and rocket-hot, they can cook most small to medium pizzas in 2 to 4 minutes! If you have one, you probably have a peel that came with your oven, and you know that you'll need to rotate your pie at least once during its short cooking time to ensure even browning.

### General Tips and Tricks for Pizza Baking:

- Be SURE to preheat your oven to at least 500 degrees F before you start.
- If you're using a steel or stone, pre-heat it as well when you preheat your oven.
- Be sure your dough slides! use lots of extra flour or cornmeal (or both) to ensure your dough doesn't stick to your work surface or baking tray.
- Move your assembled pie as little as possible - if you can top it in the tray it will bake in, you'll have less of a chance of messing up your pie in between assembly and baking steps. If you have one, assemble it on a well-floured pizza peel.
- If you're using a cast iron skillet to bake, be sure to add at least 3 Tablespoons of oil to your pan and coat the entire pan - bottom and sides - before adding your dough.

## How Will You Bake Your Pizza?



The vessel that you'll bake your pizza in will have a big impact in how you assemble your pie, what style it can be, and for how long you'll bake it. Here are some tips and tricks for each of the methods we recommend:



### Sheet Pan, Perforated Pan, or Cookie Sheet



You probably have one or more of these in your kitchen right now. Lightly oil it, THEN move your shaped dough to it, and finally add sauce and toppings - moving a fully assembled pizza from a countertop to a pan like this can be disastrous!

If you have a smaller pan, you can just press your dough into the pan and push it out to the corners and edges for a Detroit or Sicilian style pie!

### Cast Iron Skillet



Cast Iron is great for making pan pizzas! If you're using one of these, aim for something in the 10-12 inch range, and be sure to add at least 4 tablespoons of olive oil to both the bottom and edges of the pan before you add your dough and top. Pizzas cooked in a cast iron pan take longer, but result in a super-crispy, crunchy crust.



### Pizza Stone or Steel



Have one of these? You've probably made pizza before! Steels and stones are made to get ripping hot and will cook your pizza more quickly than other methods. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for best results, and you'll probably want to use a peel that's been well floured to transfer your raw pie onto your steel or stone.

**Protip:** We like placing a stone or steel on the second to top rack of your oven, pre-heating for an hour (!), sliding your pizza directly on the stone/steel surface, and switching your oven from bake to high broil for a pizza that cooks in 5 minutes or less - just be sure to watch it like a hawk so it doesn't burn.