thin crust margarita pizza from scratch

NIBBLEDISH CONTRIBUTOR

Ingredients

2 cups flour

1 tbs wheat gluten

2 1/2 tsp dry active yeast

2 tbs + 2 tsp sugar

1 tsp salt

3/4 cups warm water, plus more if needed

2 tbs olive oil

a few pinches of corn meal

Basic Toppings:

1/2 cup crushed tomatoes *

bunch of fresh basil leaves

8-10 oz fresh mozzarella

** some brands of crushed tomatoes can be watery. for this recipe, get a brand of crushed tomato with a thicker consistency.*

[metric]

470 g flour

1 tbs wheat gluten

2 1/2 tsp dry active yeast

2 tbs + 2 tsp sugar

1 ts salt

120 ml warm water, plus more if needed

2 tbs olive oil

a few pinches of corn meal

Basic Toppings:

100 g crushed tomatoes *

bunch of fresh basil leaves

250-280 g fresh mozzarella

Instructions

[this recipe yields four thin crust personal pizzas]

To prepare pizza dough, put yeast and 1 tablespoon of the sugar into a measuring cup, and add in warm water (about 100ºF, 38ºC). Give it a stir and let it sit while you prepare the dry ingredients. Put all dry ingredients (don’t forget the remaining 2 teaspoons of sugar) in a mixing bowl , or preferably in a bowl of a stand mixer if you have one and use the hook attachment. Use a whisk or fork to thoroughly blend all the dry ingredients together. Once yeast has set for about 10 minutes, or until foamy, add olive oil into the

yeast mixture. Next, start the mixer, or start stirring while adding small amounts of the liquids (yeast mixture) into the dry ingredients at a time. Do not add the liquid in all at once or else you may end up with a dough that is too wet; do not add more liquid until all the yeast mixture is thoroughly incorporated. Add or exclude some water/yeast mixture as needed. The dough should not be sticky, and not too dry and dense. Now, kneed the dough for about eight minutes, until it becomes more elastic. Then, oil a large bowl, and put the ball of dough in it to proof. Make sure the dough is completely coated with a layer of oil, then cover loosely with plastic wrap. Let the dough rise for at least two hours.

Preheat the oven to 500ºF (260ºC)—and yes, it needs to be that hot. If you have a pizza stone (highly suggested if you want a crispier crust) place it in the oven's center rack before you preheat it. If you do not have a pizza stone, a cookie sheet, or any other edgeless pan, and parchment paper will do. Do not preheat oven with cookie sheet in it. Now is a good time to prepare and lay out your toppings; have your basil ready, slice the mozzarella into about quarter inch slices (half centimeter), and have your crushed tomatoes ready.

Next, take the risen dough and press with your knuckles on a lightly floured board or countertop to evenly distribute the gas bubbles within the dough. Separate the dough into 4 even sections. Take one section and form it into a round disk about 3 to 4 inches (8 to 10 cm). Using a rolling pin, roll out the dough until it reaches a diameter of about 8-10 inches (20 to 25 cm). Obviously, the larger the diameter, the thinner the crust, so do as you like. The easiest way to ensure a round-as-possible crust is to turn the dough 1/8 of a turn each time you go over it with your rolling pin. Once you have the dough rolled out to your desired thickness, transfer to a piece of parchment paper on a cookie sheet, or if you're using a pizza stone, on a pizza board sprinkled with a little corn meal. This allows the pizza to easily slide off the board and onto the pizza stone. Now the fun part. Put a thin layer of crushed tomato (2-3 tablespoons per pizza is enough) on the crust, but leave about a 1 inch (2 cm) boarder without tomato around the perimeter. Then, put a layer of basil leaves on top of the crushed tomato, and top that with the mozzarella. Remember that the cheese will melt and spread out, so keep the slices closer to the center of the pizza, and don't overdo it. It's a good idea to prepare all the pizzas you're going to bake before you start baking the first one.

Finally, bake for exactly 6-8 minutes per pizza. It is crucial that you keep an eye on your pizza while it bakes. It can go from perfectly golden brown to perfectly burnt to a crisp within a minute. Check on your pizza after about 4 or 5 minutes. The crust should be golden brown, and the cheese should have melted. During the remaining 1-3 minutes,

the cheese will brown. After the cheese starts to turn brown in some areas, take the pizza out. Slide the pizza, off the pan or pizza board and onto a cutting board, and let cool for a few minutes before cutting. Drizzle with olive oil and a grind of black pepper before serving (optional, of course).

variations:

- toppings! add whatever toppings you'd like. just remember that anything meat must be pre-cooked. some veggies should be sautéed before hand as well.
- use different cheeses
- make an oval shaped pizza for a rustic look
- substitute up to half of the flour used with whole wheat flour