

THE BAKING STONE

Now, even a beginner can duplicate delicious “restaurant-quality” pizza, focaccia or bread in a standard home oven with the Baking Stone. Just follow these easy directions and any kind of pizza—frozen, packaged mix or start-from-scratch homemade—will have a delicate crispy crust plus a moist, juicy topping without overbaking. Breads and focaccia will be crusty outside and tender inside with a rich Tuscan texture.

This handmade stone is made of the finest heat-retaining clays available and fired at over 2000°F. With repeated use it will harden and actually improve its baking qualities.

USE AND CARE FOR YOUR BAKING STONE

1. Wash stone with water before use (no detergent). Dry well.
2. Put stone in cold oven in center of middle rack; preheat to 500°F for 15-20 min. It may be heated longer if you wish – the hotter the stone, the crispier the pizza.
3. First, liberally sprinkle a pizza paddle with cornmeal (a flat cookie sheet or large piece of cardboard may also be used.). Then put the rolled out pizza dough or formed bread dough (recipes follow) on the paddle and assemble the pizza.
4. When stone is hot, sprinkle some cornmeal on it, and then slide the pizza off the paddle and onto the stone with a quick forward motion and sharp backward jerk.
5. Bake pizza (or bread) per recipe until done and remove from oven with a paddle and serve. Let stone cool completely before washing.
6. The hot stone can be used as a server to keep your pizza piping hot. Be sure to use heavy mitts to remove stone and pizza from oven and place on a heat-proof trivet or mat to protect countertop.
7. Kitchen shears are recommended for cutting pizza when served on the stone. If you choose to cut with a pizza wheel cutter or sharp knife, first transfer pizza to a metal pan or cutting board. *Never cut pizza on the stone, as it will mar the surface.*
8. The stone is quite durable, but it may break or chip if dropped. Handle it carefully.
9. **CLEANING THE STONE:** It is normal for the stone to accumulate stains from drippings even after washing. This will not alter the taste of your pizza or bread or the stone’s baking performance. However, cooking residue may smoke and create odors. A scouring pad will remove most burned on bits. If accumulation is heavy, then a thorough sanding with a hard abrasive, like emery paper, may be necessary. An electric belt sander works well to clean the stone. Small stains can be cleaned by scrubbing with a toothbrush and a paste made of baking soda and water.

DO NOT BAKE COOKIES, TURNOVERS OR OTHER ITEMS WITH A SIGNIFICANT FAT CONTENT DIRECTLY ON THE STONE. The stone will absorb the fat and cause smoking, odors and stains.

RECIPES

PERFECT PIZZA DOUGH

Yield: Two 13-14-inch pizza shells

- 1 pkg. dried yeast (or 1 cake compressed yeast)*
- 3 ½ cups flour
- 1 cup water
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Cornmeal

Dissolve yeast in water; set stand 5-10 minutes.

Combine flour and salt in large mixing bowl. Make a well in center of flour and gradually work half the yeast mixture into well with your fingers. Add 2 tablespoons olive oil and gradually work in remaining yeast mixture. Add a tablespoon or more of water, if needed, to make dough soft and smooth.

Turn dough out onto flat surface and knead vigorously for at least 10 minutes—pushing dough away from you, then folding it back toward you—till smooth and elastic with a dull sheen. Or, using dough hook on electric stand mixer, knead for 7-8 minutes. Don't worry—you can't overknead it. Shape dough into a ball and place in a large greased bowl, turning dough over to grease the top. Cover with a damp cloth or plastic wrap; let rise in a warm place till doubled in bulk, about 45-60 minutes.

Divide dough in half.** On a lightly floured surface, roll each half into a 13-14-inch circle about 1/8-inch thick, leaving a thick ridge around edge so topping will not spill over. Sprinkle cornmeal liberally over pizza paddle. Fold dough in half, then in half again. Carefully transfer it to the center of the paddle and unfold. Rub a tablespoon of olive oil over dough surface. Top with your favorite filling or recipe at right.

Slide pizza from paddle onto preheated stone in the oven (see Baking Instructions) by holding paddle directly over stone, then giving a slight forward movement and a hard backward jerk toward you. Turn oven down to 450-475°F and bake for 20-25 minutes or till crust is crisp and brown.

- * For dry yeast, use very warm water (105-115°F).
For compressed yeast, use lukewarm water (80-90°F).

** Dough may be frozen for later use in several ways:

To Freeze Unbaked Dough: Shape dough into balls, wrap with plastic wrap and freeze. Let thaw completely at room temperature before rolling out.

To Freeze Parbaked Shells: Roll out as described, bake on pre-heated stone as directed for 8-10 minutes. Let cool. Wrap and freeze. Topping may be added before wrapping. No need to defrost before final baking. Bake frozen filled shells for 30-35 minutes or till crust is crisp and brown.

PASQUALE'S FAVORITE PIZZA TOPPING

Yield: Fills two 13-14-inch pizza shells

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ¼ cup grated parmesan or romano cheese
- 1 clove garlic, thinly-sliced vertically
- 1 ½ teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 ½ teaspoons dried basil
- 1 ½ lbs. sweet Italian sausage, removed from casing
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 ½ teaspoons fennel seed
- 1 lb. mozzarella cheese, grated
- 2 28-oz. cans Italian plum tomatoes, chopped and drained well

In large, deep frypan, lightly brown garlic in oil—do not burn. Discard garlic. Add crumbled sausage, onion and fennel to oil in frypan and saute over medium-high heat till sausage is browned. Drain all liquid from pan. Add well-drained tomatoes, ¼-cup cheese, oregano, basil and salt. Simmer over low heat, uncovered, for 25 minutes. Spoon half of topping onto each shell using slotted spoon. Sprinkle mozzarella cheese on top. Bake as directed (see Perfect Pizza Dough).



ROASTED VEGETABLE PIZZA TOPPING (LOW FAT)

Yield: Fills one 13-14-inch pizza shell

- 1 cup eggplant, peeled and cubed
- ¼ cup chopped scallions
- 1 lb. fresh plum tomatoes, each cut into 8 pcs.
- 1 cup coarsely chopped zucchini
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced (optional)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoons freshly-grated parmesan cheese

Put all ingredients except cheese and olive oil into large baking pan. Drizzle on olive oil and toss well. Roast vegetables in a preheated 425°F oven for 5 minutes. Remove from oven and toss vegetables. Return pan to oven for 5-7 minutes. Remove pan and allow to cool.

Spread vegetables evenly over a 13-14-inch pizza shell. Sprinkle on parmesan cheese. Bake pizza on preheated stone for 10-15 minutes until dough is crisp and browned.

ITALIAN BREAD

Yield: Two loaves

1 pkg. active dry yeast
1 cup warm water (105-115°F)
2 cups warm water
1 tablespoon salt

6-7 cups flour
Cornmeal
Butter

Dissolve yeast in 1 cup warm water; let stand 5 minutes. Dissolve salt in 2 cups warm water. Put 5 cups of flour in large bowl, add wet ingredients, mix well. Add enough remaining flour to make a workable dough.

Turn out onto a lightly floured board and knead for 10 minutes until dough is smooth and elastic and has a satiny sheen. Or, using dough hook on electric stand mixer, knead for 7-8 minutes.

Place in greased bowl and turn once to grease top. Cover; place bowl in warm, draft-free place; let rise till double in bulk: 1-1 ½ hours.

Turn dough out onto board and knead for five minutes more. Divide dough into two pieces and round each piece into a ball. Return to greased bowl; cover and let rise till doubled, approximately 40-60 minutes.

Separate pieces of dough (they will come apart). Roll each ball into an oblong shape using both hands. Shape into Italian-style loaves. Sprinkle cornmeal on baking paddle. Place loaves on paddle, cover, let rise until doubled (about 30 minutes).

Brush tops with melted butter. Make one long slash, about 1-inch deep nearly the entire length of the loaf (a single-edged razor blade works best). Place Baking Stone in oven; pre-heat oven to 375°F. Slide loaves from paddle onto the stone. Bake for 50-60 min. on stone until golden brown and bread sounds hollow when tapped.

