

## Basic Pizza Dough Recipe

5 cups of bread flour  
2 cups of warm water  
1/4 cup of olive oil  
1 tablespoon kosher salt  
1 package active dry yeast  
1 tablespoon sugar

First mix the yeast and the sugar with a little of the water, and whisk to dissolve the yeast. Whisk in the remaining sugar. Leave to stand for about 5 minutes until the mixture is frothy.

Whisk in about 2 cups of sifted flour, to make a thick batter: cover with a kitchen towel, a plate or plastic wrap, and leave in a warm place for about 20 minutes. The yeast should have fermented to the extent that the batter will be full of large bubbles and will have risen up in the bowl.

Whisk in the olive oil. Gradually beat in the salt and more flour until the dough has a stiff texture, but is still very moist, but not sticky; at this point you will need to switch to working by hand. Put some flour on a clean work surface, and knead the dough, gradually adding flour to keep the dough from sticking, until the consistency of the dough is right (you will learn this from practice: it should be very moist, almost but not quite stick) Continue kneading until the dough is ready: the way to test this is to stretch the dough between your fingers: it should stretch into an almost transparent "window".

Transfer the dough to a large oiled bowl, turning the dough so that it gets a very thin coating of oil. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap, and leave to rise until the dough has doubled in size. (Most recipes say "doubled in bulk", but it seems that they actually mean that it is about twice as high and twice as wide, which is actually about 8 times as big in volume!)

Take the dough out of the bowl, press it down, and cut it into three equal size pieces. Take each piece, and form it into a ball. Place inside an oiled ziplock bag, and refrigerate for between 12 and 36 hours.

A couple of hours before baking time, remove the dough from the fridge, gently take it out of the plastic bag (cut the plastic bag away if this is necessary). Cover the dough, and leave it to relax for about an hour and a half.

Preheat the oven to 450 Fahrenheit (or higher if your oven will handle it).

Gently stretch the dough into a thin flat rectangle: don't knead it, or try to press it hard into shape; concentrate on stretching it, not pushing it. If you have a baker's peel, dust it with cornmeal, and place the dough on the peel. Otherwise dust a baking stone or baking sheet with cornmeal and place the dough on it. Leave it to rise for about 20 minutes. Put on your favorite toppings: I particularly like just cheese and slices of tomato with no sauce for a traditional taste. Slide the pizza into the oven.

The bread will take about 15 minutes to cook: it is done when it is a golden brown, and is perhaps speckled with little bubbles on the top. Remove from the oven, and place on a wire rack. Allow to cool for 5–10 minutes before cutting.