

Italian Sausage and Three Pepper Pizza

In the Italian tradition, sausage and peppers were standard fare for an easy weeknight meal. So it makes sense for a pizza to be colorfully topped with chunks of sausage and a medley of sweet peppers. Not wanting the peppers to taste raw, we chose to quickly sauté them with a hint of garlic, oregano, and a kick of cayenne. The peppers are then layered over our flavor-packed pizza sauce, topped with chunks of spicy sausage, covered with cheese, and baked to perfection. More top-heavy than our other New York pies, this pizza may be a little harder to fold like a book, but we promise it will leave an oozing trail of oil down your arm!

Ingredients

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 small green bell pepper, seeded, deribbed, and cut into 1/4-inch strips
1 small red bell pepper, seeded, deribbed, and cut into 1/4-inch strips
1 small yellow bell pepper, seeded, deribbed, and cut into 1/4-inch strips
1 teaspoon minced garlic
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
Freshly ground pepper
Vegetable-oil cooking spray
1 portion (15 ounces) New York–Style Pizza Dough (recipe follows), at room temperature
Unbleached bread flour for dusting
1/2 cup New York–Style Pizza Sauce (recipe follows)
2 mild or hot Italian pork sausages (about 1/2 pound), cut crosswise into 1/4-inch slices
2 cups (8 ounces) coarsely shredded whole-milk or part-skim, low-moisture mozzarella cheese
1/4 pound bulk mild or hot Italian pork sausage, separated into small chunks
1/2 tablespoon freshly grated Parmesan cheese



Recipe picture



From: Pizza
By Diane Morgan

Position an oven rack on the second-lowest level in the oven and place a baking stone on the rack. Position another rack in the upper third of the oven. Preheat the oven to 500°F.

While the oven is heating, warm the olive oil in a large skillet, preferably nonstick, over medium-high heat. Add all the bell peppers and sauté, stirring frequently, until crisp-tender, about 4 minutes. Add the garlic, oregano, cayenne, salt, and a few grindings of fresh pepper and sauté for 1 minute longer. Set aside to cool slightly.

Coat a 12-inch pizza screen or perforated pizza pan with the cooking spray. Remove the dough from the plastic bag and place on a lightly floured work surface. Lightly dust the dough with flour. Using a rolling pin, roll the dough into a 10-inch round without rolling over the edges. Lift the dough and check to make sure the dough isn't sticking to the work surface. Shake the excess flour from the dough. Following the Dough Tossing Techniques in the book, toss the dough until it is stretched to a 12-inch circle and place it on the prepared screen. Alternatively, lay the dough on the prepared pizza screen and gently stretch the dough into a 12-inch round.

To top the pizza: Spread the pizza sauce evenly over the dough, leaving a 1/2-inch border. Distribute the peppers over the sauce. Arrange the sausage slices over the top. Scatter the mozzarella over the top. Arrange the chunks of bulk sausage evenly over the cheese, pressing them into the cheese slightly.

Place the pizza in the oven on the upper rack. (Work quickly to slide the pizza into the oven and close the door so the oven temperature doesn't drop too much.) Bake the pizza until the crust is crisp and golden brown, 10 minutes. Using a pizza peel, lift the pizza off the screen or pan and place the crust directly on the pizza stone. Using the peel or wearing thick oven mitts, remove the screen or pan from the oven. Continue baking the pizza until the bottom of the crust is golden brown, 3 to 4 minutes longer. Using the peel, remove the pizza from the oven and transfer to a cutting board. Sprinkle the Parmesan over the top. Slice the pizza into wedges and serve immediately.

Makes one 12-inch pizza; serves 4 to 6

New York–Style Pizza Dough

You'll find this dough to be a little wetter and tackier to work with than some of the others in the book. Learning to work with a slightly sticky dough rewards you with a crust that is crisp and airy, yet chewy. In New York, most pizza dough is pressed, stretched, and tossed, but never rolled with a rolling pin. Keep your hands well dusted with flour and even though the dough feels tacky, your hands won't stick and tear the dough. As you press and stretch the dough, if it bounces back, let it rest for a few minutes before continuing to stretch and toss the dough. This is a great dough for practicing your tossing skills! (See all about Dough-Tossing Techniques in the book!)

1 package (2 1/4 teaspoons) active dry yeast
1 cup lukewarm water (90° to 100°F)
1 1/4 cups ice-cold water
1 teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon table salt or 1 1/2 tablespoons kosher salt
2 tablespoons olive oil
5 1/4 to 5 1/2 cups unbleached bread flour, plus more for dusting

In a small bowl, using a fork, stir the yeast into the lukewarm water. Set aside until the yeast dissolves, about 5 minutes.

In another small bowl, combine the cold water, sugar, salt, and olive oil. Stir to dissolve the sugar and salt.

To make the dough by hand: Place 5 1/4 cups of the flour in a large bowl. Make a well in the center of the flour and stir in the yeast mixture along with the cold-water mixture. Using a wooden spoon, mix the dough, incorporating as much of the flour as possible. Turn the dough out on a lightly floured work surface and knead until soft and elastic, 10 to 12 minutes. It will still be a little sticky but shouldn't stick to your hands. Add only a minimum amount of flour to the work surface to keep the dough from sticking.

To make the dough using a mixer: Fit a heavy-duty stand mixer with the dough hook attachment. Place 5 1/4 cups of the flour in the mixer bowl. Add the yeast mixture along with the cold-water mixture and mix on low speed until the flour is incorporated and the dough gathers together to form a coarse ball, about 4 minutes. Let rest for 2 minutes and then mix on low speed until the dough is smooth and not sticky, about 6 minutes longer. (If the dough begins to climb up the dough hook towards the motor drive, stop the mixer and push it down. If the machine labors and the motor feels hot, stop and wait a few minutes for the motor to cool down.) Turn the dough out on a well-floured work surface and knead for a minute or two until it forms a smooth ball, adding up to 1/4 cup of additional flour, if necessary.

To prepare the dough for rising: Cut the dough into thirds to form three even portions, each weighing 15 ounces. With floured hands, pick up one portion of dough and pull the opposite edges together, wrapping them underneath towards the center to form a tight, smooth ball. Pinch to seal. Repeat with the other two portions. Place each portion in a 1-gallon lock-top plastic bag. Squeeze out all the air and seal the bag, allowing enough room for the dough to double in size. Refrigerate at least 10 hours or up to 2 days. Remove from the refrigerator 1 hour before using to allow the dough to come to room temperature. Proceed with any New York–style pizza recipe.

Makes 45 ounces dough, or three 15-ounce portions, enough for three 12-inch pizzas

New York–Style Pizza Sauce

Store-bought “pizza sauce” tends to be over-sweetened, gummy, and lacking the flavor hit of fresh herbs. Take a few minutes and make your own sauce for pizza—this one takes less than 10 minutes to come together. The good taste of imported Italian tomatoes, fruity extra-virgin olive oil, a hint of garlic, and the herbal aroma of fresh basil makes this sauce the perfect and proper base for the New York pizzas in this chapter.

1 can (14.5 ounces) diced tomatoes in juice (see Cook’s Note)
1 can (6 ounces) tomato paste
1 1/2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil leaves, or 2 teaspoons dried basil
1 1/2 teaspoons dried oregano
1 1/2 teaspoons sugar
1/2 teaspoon minced garlic
3/4 teaspoon table salt or 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt

In a medium bowl, combine the diced tomatoes, including the juice from the can, the tomato paste, olive oil, basil, oregano, sugar, garlic, and salt. Taste and add more salt, if desired. Use immediately, or store in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days, or freeze for up to two months. Bring to room temperature before using.

Makes about 2 1/2 cups

Cook’s Note

One brand of chopped tomatoes that is a favorite of ours is Pomi tomatoes, made in Italy by Parmalat. This brand of tomatoes comes in a 26.5-ounce box, which keeps the tomatoes very fresh tasting and prevents them from picking up a canned flavor. Look for them in well-stocked supermarkets or in specialty stores carrying Italian foodstuffs.