

Pizza Margherita

with Waffled Crust

IRON: Belgian or standard

TIME: 3½ hours (including time for dough to rise)

YIELD: Serves 6

This one came together with the help of a pizza expert.

Dimitri Syrkin-Nikolau opened the doors, and the pizza ovens, of Dimo's Pizza on Chicago's North Side—and really went to town. We tested some pretty outrageous waffled pizzas: mashed potato, stuffing, and gravy pizza; chicken, waffles, and crème fraîche pizza; and crab, cream cheese, and sweet-and-sour sauce pizza. Most important, we learned what works and what doesn't.

There are two ways to go here: the more traditional pizza-like waffled pizza, where the toppings sit atop the crust, and the calzone-style waffled pizza, where the dough encases the filling. The first method marries waffle and pizza with minimum fuss: Cook the dough in the waffle iron and then fudge it ever so slightly—really, it's not cheating because I've done this myself and what am I if not the arbiter of all things waffled?—and stick it under the broiler to finish. Voilà. Pizza on a waffled crust.

If you can get the dough thin enough, the calzone-style waffled pizza has something to offer; it's certainly the version that looks most like a waffle. And you don't have to heat up the oven. The only possible drawback with doing it this way is the tendency for the result to be too breadly. After all, it's going to have two crusts.

INGREDIENTS

Crust:

- 4 cups bread flour, plus more for dusting
- 1 teaspoon instant yeast
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 1½ cups lukewarm water
- Neutral-flavored oil, such as canola, for coating the bowl
- Nonstick cooking spray

Topping:

- 3 cups marinara sauce (see Tips, opposite)
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved (optional)
- 1 large bunch basil, washed, dried, and finely chopped

1 Make the crust: In a large bowl, combine the flour, yeast, and salt. Add the water and mix until the dough is shaggy and most of the water has been absorbed. Turn the dough out of the bowl onto a lightly floured counter and knead until it is just blended but not too smooth. Cover the dough with a damp towel or plastic wrap and let it rest for 10 to 15 minutes.

2 Knead the dough until it is fairly smooth, 5 to 10 minutes.

3 Coat a bowl with the oil, add the dough to the bowl, and turn to coat. Let the dough rise in a warm place, covered with plastic wrap, for 2½ hours, or until nearly doubled in size.

4 Dust your work surface with more flour. Punch down the dough, divide it into 6 pieces, place the pieces on your work surface, and form each into a smooth ball. Allow the pieces to rest for 5 minutes, covered by a cloth or plastic wrap. When you are ready to waffle, remove the wrap and shape each piece into a disk, pulling gradually on the dough to expand it. If it resists, let it rest for 5 minutes before continuing.

5 Preheat the waffle iron on medium. Coat both sides of the waffle iron grid with nonstick spray.

6 Pull a disk of dough evenly until it's as thin as possible, roughly circular, and about 8 inches in diameter (but no bigger than your waffle iron). If the dough tears, repair the tear by pushing the dough together and continuing to stretch other parts of the dough. Repeat with each dough disk.

7 Preheat the broiler.

8 Put a disk of dough in the waffle iron and cook about 5 minutes, or until golden brown.

9 Remove the disk from the waffle iron and set it on a baking sheet. Repeat Step 8 with the remaining disks.

10 Top each waffled crust with about ½ cup of sauce, ⅓ cup of cheese, and a handful of the tomatoes, if using, and place the baking sheet under the broiler for about 2 minutes, until the cheese is melted and bubbling.

11 Remove the pizzas from the broiler, sprinkle with basil, and serve warm.

VARIATION

Interested in a version that is waffled from start to finish? I give you the Waffled Calzone:

1 After the disks have been formed in Step 6, put $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sauce, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cheese, a few tomatoes, if using, and a small handful of basil on one half of the dough, leaving a margin of about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch all around. Fold over the dough to envelop the toppings in a pocket and pinch the edges to seal. Place the pocket in the waffle iron and close the lid.

2 Cook for 5 minutes and then check. The cooking time will depend on the thickness of the dough. Calzones with very thin dough may be done after 5 minutes. Thicker dough may take a few more minutes. The dough should be golden brown and the cheese should be melted.

3 Repeat with the remaining ingredients. Serve warm with extra marinara sauce for dipping.

TIPS

- This recipe makes more dough than you're likely to use at one time. That's definitely an advantage, not a disadvantage. Put any extra dough in an oiled zip-top bag. Pizza dough will store beautifully in the freezer for months. Just let it come to room temperature in a bowl

covered with plastic wrap before you proceed.

- For the marinara sauce, you can use a store-bought version, or make the recipe from the Spaghetti and Waffled Meatballs (Steps 1 to 5, page 65) cooked down for an additional hour.