

mediterraneangardenpizza



Makes 2 x 30cm (12") thin crust pizzas

Ingredients

PIZZA BASE

- 500 g (1.1 lb) strong white bread flour plus extra for dusting
- 5 ml (1 tsp) salt
- 2 x 7 g ($\frac{1}{4}$ oz) sachets fast-action dried yeast
- 10 ml (2 tsp) dried chilli flakes
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) chopped rosemary
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) olive oil plus extra for greasing
- 250 ml (9 fl oz) tepid water

PIZZA TOPPING

- 30 ml (2 tbsp) olive oil
- 1 large red onion, cut into 6 wedges
- 2 courgettes, halved lengthways and cut diagonally into 1 cm wide slices
- 1 red pepper, quartered, deseeded and each quarter cut into 6 pieces
- 1 yellow pepper, quartered, deseeded and each quarter cut into 6 pieces
- 3 garlic cloves, crushed
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) fresh thyme leaves
- 24 cherry tomatoes
- 2 x 250 g (10 oz) jars pizza topping sauce

TO SERVE

- 15 ml (1 tbsp) balsamic vinegar
- 15 ml (1 tbsp) red wine
- 10 ml (2 tsp) caster sugar
- Small handful rosemary and thyme leaves
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method

- 1 Sift the flour into a bowl and add the salt, yeast, chilli flakes and rosemary.
- 2 Make a well in the centre and pour in the oil and water. Mix to a dough and knead on a floured surface for 10 minutes until smooth and elastic. (Alternatively, use an electric mixer with a dough hook attachment.)
- 3 Place the dough in a lightly oiled bowl. Cover the bowl and leave in a warm place for about 1 hour until the dough has doubled in size.
- 4 Meanwhile, prepare the vegetable topping. Heat the oil in a large sauté pan and gently fry the onion for 2-3 minutes, turning occasionally.
- 5 Add the courgettes, peppers, garlic and thyme. Sauté for 2-3 minutes until just catching colour. Add the tomatoes and sauté for a further 1-2 minutes until their skins start to pop. Season the vegetables well.
- 6 Place 2 pizza stones or baking sheets in the oven and pre-heat to 230C/450F/Gas 8.
- 7 Knock the dough back and knead for a few minutes on a lightly floured surface. Divide it in two and roll each half out to a thin 30 cm (12") round. Place each one on the pizza stones or baking sheets.
- 8 Spread the topping sauce over each base leaving a 1 cm ($\frac{1}{2}$ ") border around the edge. Scatter the prepared vegetables evenly on top.
- 9 Bake in the oven for about 15-20 minutes until the base is crisp, cooked through and just catching colour.
- 10 Meanwhile, simmer the balsamic vinegar, red wine and sugar together in a small pan for a few minutes until reduced to a couple of tablespoons.
- 11 Drizzle the reduced vinegar mixture across the pizzas. Scatter the rosemary and thyme over each one and serve.

pizza

pizzascience

- The Associazione Verace Pizza Napoletana, or 'The Association of True Neapolitan Pizza', maintains strict guidelines its members must follow. The pizza dough must be made only with flour, natural yeast or brewers' yeast, salt and water and it must be kneaded by hand or using mixers which don't cause the dough to overheat: high temperatures can make the dough rise too quickly and affect the taste and texture. The oven also has to be the traditional bell shape with a floor made of volcanic stone.
- Many a home-delivery pizza has been spoiled by the soggy bottom syndrome. The combination of toppings with a high water content, and bases that are undercooked *and* much thicker than the traditional Italian versions make crispness hard to maintain. Add steam from the hot pizza getting trapped in the cardboard delivery box, and you have a recipe for disaster. One company has tried a carton with legs, to allow more air to circulate. A higher-tech solution is a breathable bag to stop the pizza getting sweaty, combined with a heated disk to keep the pizza hot.
- When storing your hard cheese in the fridge, it's worth wrapping it up to help keep flavour. More cheese is spoiled by drying out in cold, airless fridges than by mould. Use waxed paper, or wrap it in foil that you've pierced in several places, to allow the cheese to breathe a little.

pizzahistory

- Mama Mia! It was the Greeks – not the Italians – who first used bread as a pizza-style plate. They baked large, round, flat breads which they topped with various items such as olive oils, spices and potatoes.
- Baker Raffaele Esposito of Naples is often credited as the inventor of 'modern' pizza. In 1889 he baked pizzas to celebrate a visit by King Umberto I, and his Queen, Margherita. One of the dishes was topped with tomato, mozzarella and basil – the colours of the Italian flag. He called the pizza Margherita, in honour of his royal guest.
- Pizza migrated to the USA with Italian workers in the second half of the 19th century. The first real pizzeria opened in 1905 in New York City, but the real demand for pizza was sparked by GIs returning from Italy after World War 2.