



These are all suggestions.

Just as in winemaking, there are so many variations that work, and beauty is in the eye of the beholder. I've found what works for my palate and preference, and our wine-loving friends should do the same. Enjoy! Bob Betz

Use the best ingredients you can!

Tomatoes, flour, cheeses, toppings, fresh herbs, olive oil, ... will all make a difference.

The Sauce:

I used a couple of large cans of whole, peeled, tomatoes. They were San Marzano tomatoes from southern Italy. If possible, use tomatoes that carry the Italian guarantee of origin authenticity, DOP (stands for *Denominazione di Origine Protetta*, literally "Protected Designation of Origin"). I crushed them by hand into a saucepan and reduced over low to medium heat until the sauce thickened, not too watery but not "cooked down". The result should be easily spreadable on the dough but "stand up" and not watery enough to make the dough soggy. Salt and pepper to your preference, after reducing them.

But the variations are according to your palate and preference. Use fresh tomatoes, other canned tomatoes, ... that suit your preference, reducing them to the same consistency.

The Dough:

It's all about the dough because it's all about the crust.

We used the VPN (*Vera Pizza Napolitana*) recommendations for four ingredients: flour, water, yeast, and salt. The flour used was 100% Italian, of a particularly fine grind called **Tipo 00**, or **00 Type**. It's widely available in kilo bags in Italian groceries, high end supermarkets and on-line (look for brands like Caputo, Tua Farina, ...). You can adjust to your preference of flour, using all purpose, cake flour, ... and make adjustments to suit your preference with some semolina, cornmeal, olive oil, ...

Here are some measurements I've worked out over the years using the Italian flour:

For 3 8-9 ounce dough balls:

3.5 cups flour
~ 10 ounces water
~ 1 TBS salt
Shy TBS yeast

For 6 8-9 ounce dough balls:

7 cups flour, that's the full 1-kilo bag
~ 20 ounces flour
~ 2 TBS salt
A generous TBS yeast

Water and salt are approximations. Humidity, temperature, and personal preferences play a role. You can mix the whole thing by hand on a work surface or in a bowl, but for me, the initial assembly is easy in a "slow" speed in a KitchenAid. Toss in your flour. In a separate glass mix a portion of your water with the salt and stir vigorously to dissolve. Add 4-5 TBS of the flour to the water/salt mixture and stir once again to mix well. Then add yeast to this mixture, dissolving it by gentle stirring. Slowly add this water/salt/yeast mixture to the full bowl as the dough hook is stirring the flour. Once it's incorporated, start slowly adding the remaining water to the flour. Be judicious with the water addition. If you find your dough is too sticky add small amounts of

flour. If too dry, add water by tablespoons and work until incorporated. At this point you want the dough to be tacky but not sticky. Continue to machine-knead until the dough forms a ball and typically cleans the flour from the sides of the mixing bowl. Slow and gentle, here; no need to rush.

Turn the whole mass onto a dusted work surface and start kneading by hand. This will take several minutes of diligent kneading. Incorporate additional flour as needed so that the dough forms a unified, smooth ball. The result should be smooth as a baby's cheek. You can rise the entire mass as one. I prefer to rise it already divided into 8-9 ounce balls, dusted and placed on a dusted sheet pan.

Some people cover with a barely moist towel and let it rise out of drafts for a couple of hours until they use it; many find success in this method by coating the dough mass with olive oil and allowing it to rise in a large bowl. I prefer to make the dough the day in advance. If you do, put in the refrigerator on sheet pans that have been dusted with flour. Cover loosely with plastic wrap to give them a little room to slowly start to do the cold rise. Take them out of the frig 2-3 hours ahead and keep at room temperature to warm and they will expand/rise. Watch that they don't crowd each other; move them to a flour-dusted counter to rise, loosely covered with a barely moist towel.

The Pizzas:

To form the pizzas, I prefer to work the dough by hand, rather than a rolling pin. You'll retain more elasticity and "riseability" without rolling. Liberally dust the work surface and your hands with flour. Gently push down in the center of your dough ball, using a slight twisting motion repeatedly to expand the dough diameter. Or lift the dough holding from an inch or so from the edge and gently work your hand around the dough disc allowing the weight of the hanging dough to stretch it into your circle. Stretch the dough to the shape and thickness you wish, remembering that it will rise somewhat once in the oven.

Toppings:

Then have at it and top (decorate?) your pizza as you wish. This is all about what you enjoy, from the simplest to the most complex. A smear of tomato sauce, a hint of basil and fresh mozzarella, all the way to fresh clams or confit duck legs. It all works, especially if you let the dough shine through. It's not about volume; it's the savoring of the ingredients as they come together to form the whole.

From the recorded session:

- Eggplant, onion, caper, black olives - paired with La Serenne, Syrah
- Sausage, red onion, black olive, mozzarella, parmesan cheese - paired with La Côte Rouse, Syrah
- Wild mushrooms, pecorino, thyme - paired with Domaine Pierres, Syrah
- Potato, parmesan cheese, rosemary - paired with Père de Famille, Cabernet Sauvignon
- Gorgonzola, fig, parsley, balsamic drizzle - paired with La Côte Patriarche, Syrah
- Marinara: tomato sauce, mozzarella, basil, garlic, oregano - paired with Clos de Betz, Merlot
- Anchovy, sautéed onion, black olives, oregano - paired with Quinta Essentia, Chenin Blanc

