

Pizza is one of the simplest dishes to prepare. Its ingredients are so varied that I can usually make one or two when our pantry is low. Such as tonight! We've been in San Francisco for a week, and depleted pretty much anything fresh or interesting. On nights like tonight, I go into my bag of tricks and see what I can find.

I usually keep a 1# pack of mozzarella in the fridge. However, Edam, Feta, Cheddar, and Parmesan work well, too.

I have some prosciutto, about 8 slices – that will be lots. Of course you don't need meat, but if you want it, use it! Any dry-cured-sausage, ham, cooked meat will work. Just make sure it's slice thinly or cut into small pieces.

Vegetables – tomatoes, olives, jalapenos, capers, red onions, peppers, mushrooms, and artichokes – marinated eggplant is excellent. Check out your fridge, and the back of your pantry, you never know what you might have. I'm using the last few grape tomatoes off our tumbler vine. Autumn arrived while we were away, and the last few tomatoes need to be used up. I also had a half jar of pickled jalapeños. Just be sure nothing is too wet. Blot it dry if necessary.

Basic Pizza

2 - 12" pizza pans or 1 – 11 x 17" baking pan

Ingredients:

1 scant T of yeast

1c of warm water

2½c flour

2T olive oil

1t salt

1t sugar

1# of mozzarella

A big handful of coarsely grated Parmesan

Some chopped tomatoes – about ½ a cup

8 slices of prosciutto

About ½ c of sliced & pickled jalapeños

1 cup of tomato sauce

dried herbs

garlic

salt & pepper to taste

chilies

Directions:

Preheat oven to 425°

In a fairly large bowl, mix the yeast with the warm water, and dissolve for 5 minutes. Whisk them together gently.

Add in 1 cup of flour, whisk until uniform.

Add in the oil, salt & sugar, whisk thoroughly.

Stir in the remaining 1½ c of flour.

Give it about 30 good strokes until well combined.

Using your hands, clean off the spoon and quickly knead the dough until all the dry bits are incorporated.

Let rest while you prepare the toppings.

Grate the cheeses.

Cut up the tomatoes, and any jalapeños that are too large.

Cut the meat into long strips.

Mix some herbs, finely chopped garlic and salt & pepper into the tomato sauce. Use just enough to make it fragrant. 1 t of herbs and a clove of garlic should be enough. Only use salt if the tomato sauce is unsalted.

Divide the dough in half if using 2 – 12" pizza pans. If using an 11 x 17 pan, use the whole of it.

Roll out the dough to basically fit the pans. It doesn't need to be perfect. Dust the top with a bit of flour to keep the rolling pin from sticking, but the bottom should pull cleanly off the counter.

Lay the dough on the pan(s). Using your fingers fit it to the edges. The dough should stay put when you do this.

Once the dough's in place, spread ½ c of the seasoned tomato sauce on each pizza.

Scatter just a bit of the mozzarella on top of the sauce.

Scatter the meat evenly on top of the mozzarella. Try to have some edges on their sides so that they crisp up.

Scatter the vegetables on top of the meat, uniformly.

Scatter on the remaining mozzarella.

Top with the Parmesan.

Sprinkle with a pinch of dried chilies (optional).

Bake for 20 minutes.

Let rest for 5 minutes before slicing and serving.

Tips: Don't overload this style of pizza. Two or three toppings with the cheese and sauce are ample. Also, what tends to happen is that the steam from the meat and vegetables tends to make the dough damp, and a crisp crust is usually preferred!