



# Doughsertation

By Doctor Dough

Prescription for a *Dough*verwhelmingly Great Pizza

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## *The Vitals*

*Your pizza specs: Ingredients, cook time, prep time, servings.*

- Serving: 1 – 2 people (makes a 9 - 10 inch pizza; or slightly larger than a “personal” size pie)
- Preparation Time: One hour (10 minutes of work while the oven preheats for 60 minutes)
- Cook Time: 5 – 8 minutes
- Equipment:
  - Baking pan or dish
  - Pizza peel
  - Pizza cutter
  - Pizza stone (or steel or cast iron)
  - Spatula
  - Baking sheet (something to remove cooked pizza from the oven)
- Ingredients:
  - All purpose (AP) flour
  - Semolina or white rice flour
  - Toppings (pepperoni, onions, cheese, red sauce, etc)

## *Makin’ It*

*Arrange your equipment and prep area before beginning the Doughventure.*

Equipment:

- Quarter or half sheet baking pan OR similar sized baking dish OR some other flat type of vessel with sides to hold your all purpose (AP) flour.
- Pizza peel OR something else large, flat, lightweight and preferably wood to launch your pizza into the nuclear hot oven. NOTE: raw dough sticks more to metal peels than wood.
- All Purpose flour (AP) to coat your raw dough so you can handle and shape it easier with your hands.
- Semolina flour OR white rice flour OR corn meal (fine grind) to coat the pizza peel so the raw dough launches easier into the nuclear hot oven.
- Pizza toppings – have them all ready to go. The less time the raw dough spends on the pizza peel, the less chance it will stick and the greater chance you’ll have a successful launch.
- Something to remove the pizza from the oven after it’s fully cooked. This can include something fancy like a metal pizza peel OR something that we probably already have in our kitchen like a sheet pan and spatula.

- Something to slice your pizza after it has had a chance to cool for a minute. Pizza wheel cutters are readily available most everywhere. A decent chef's knife also works. Smaller knives will do in a pinch (think table steak knives) however, the larger the better. You don't want to go all B-movie slasher on your beautiful pizza and risk hot melty cheese and perfectly placed toppings going wayward. It's better to press evenly like one can when using a chef's knife.
- A surface upon which to cook your pizza. This generally takes the form of 1 of 3 common and easy to find items. The first and least expensive is a pizza stone. This is generally some type of ceramic, round or square, surface that rests on one of your oven's racks. The second is a cast iron baking surface. The company Lodge makes a 15 inch round cast iron pizza pan that is very popular and not much more expensive than the ceramic pizza stone. This too rests directly on your oven's rack. The third surface is a baking steel. These are quarter inch (or thicker) slabs of steel. They are usually square but come in different shapes and styles. They are all heavy and rest directly on the oven rack. They are the most expensive of the three but have the best performance. The steel will retain the most amount of heat, cooking your pizza the quickest of the three and providing the best browning. A cast iron pan is a very close second while the stone is a close third. ANY of these baking surfaces will give you a great pizza. If you already have one of these, you're *DoughK* and ready to go! Creativity also wins points in this category. If you have a nice size cast iron skillet, something about 12 inches in diameter, you can place that upside down on your oven rack. This way, the bottom of the pan becomes your pizza pan / cooking surface!

NOTE: Please do NOT use a baking sheet as your cooking surface. That is not *DoughK*. At those oven temperatures, your pan will warp in loud frightening ways. Additionally, most baking sheets are aluminum. That metal won't be able to retain enough heat to properly cook your dough.

## *Prepping' It*

*Get your dough out of the chilly box and set that oven to nuclear hot.*

Get Doctor Dough out of the fridge or freezer. Your dough needs time to warm up. If it's being kept in the freezer, then you should remove it about 4 - 5 hours before you intend to use it. If it has been in the fridge and already thawed, then 2- 3 hours is fine. Simply place the container of dough on your kitchen counter and that's it. You can now pat yourself on the back as you've successfully completed the first step to making great pizza.

NOTE: If it's winter and your house is cool inside, the longer times may be necessary. If it's summer and your house is warm inside, the shorter times should work just fine.

### **HEY! THIS IS IMPORTANT! PAY ATTENTION TO THESE NEXT WORDS:**

An hour before you want to make your pizza (or first pizza, if more than one) you will need to preheat your oven to nuclear hot. Please do this WITH your baking steel / pizza stone / cast iron pan thingy already inside. Your baking surface should be on the rack located in the upper middle position of your oven. Turn on your oven to its highest temperature setting. For most home ovens, that is 500 - 550F. Some newer ovens have a "Pizza" setting. If you got that, use it! If your oven has convection, it's usually a good idea to turn that ON. Usually. (Some experimenting might be needed to find the right setting for your oven. For example, in my oven, I use the Convection Roast setting at 550F with the rack on the second rung from the top. In the name of science, this experimenting is a great excuse to make more pizza!)

## *Settin' It Up*

*Flour power! All-purpose & semolina to the rescue.*

Grab your sheet pan, add a generous amount of AP flour. (You will end up throwing away the unused flour from this step. You may want to use a less expensive flour and not one that was grown in protected regions of Italy and hand milled by Monks.) You will need enough flour so that you can coat both sides of the raw dough AND push out the dough to begin forming the pizza pie shape. Set your pizza peel next to the sheet pan and give it a good coating of semolina flour. Sprinkle on the flour with a heavy hand then swirl it around the entire peel (except the handle) so that there is a thin even coating of the flour. (Perfection is NOT necessary) This will act as the ball bearings to help slide your raw pizza dough into the oven. Finally, have all your toppings open, prepared and ready to add to your masterpiece.

## *Shapin' It*

*How to turn that ball into a pie. Hint: it's not magic.*

### Step 1:

Empty your room temperature dough directly into the sheet pan with the AP flour. Patience may be required for the dough to come out of its container. After it's in the flour, flip the dough over to coat the other side in flour. You don't want to see any area on the dough that is wet. If you need to toss a little flour over the top to accomplish this, go for it.

**SUPER IMPORTANT NOTE:** If you have a rolling pin waiting to be used for this next step, BACK OFF! It has no place around this dough and should never be spoken of in its presence. This note of doom and gloom is brought to you by all the yeast who have worked so hard to create a zillion air bubbles in your pizza dough. Those bubbles are going to give your finished pizza a beautiful light and airy crust. If you use a rolling pin to smush your dough, you will squeeze out most of those bubbles. That will make the yeast sad. Sad yeast makes sad pizza. You want happy pizza, right? Don't hate the yeast.

### Step 2:

Time to shape the dough into a proper pizza pie. With the dough still in the AP flour, gently push out and flatten the dough starting in the center and moving outward. With the tips of your fingers of both hands, gently press down on the middle of the dough then again towards the outer edge. Rotate your fingers a bit and push out in that direction. Continue rotating until you've gone around the whole circumference and it looks like you have a thick mini pizza. Several rounds of pressing out the dough will probably be required.

NOTE: Yes, this step will squeeze out some air from those precious pockets of yeasty love. There is no way to avoid this. A much smaller amount of dough gas is lost using this method than if a rolling pin is used.

### Step 3:

Gently pick up your dough and place it flat on the palm of your hand. Pass the dough back and forth between your open flat hands so that, for example, the bottom of the pie lies on your left hand, then passed to your right hand, the top of the pie lies against that hand. This is going to slightly stretch your dough, but more importantly, it will shake off the excess AP flour.

After passing the dough back and forth between your hands a few times, it's now time to use your knuckles and gravity to stretch your dough. Get both hands, balled up in fists, under the edge of the dough and close to each other. The dough should be hanging down, from your two hands, away from you. Gravity is your bestie and will help to stretch out the dough. You can simultaneously gently stretch the dough with your two fists. After a gentle stretch, rotate

the dough with your fists and tackle the next area with a stretch and a gravity assist. Do this around the whole circle of dough. You may need to do this full circle several times. Warmer dough will stretch easier than cooler dough. You will need to pay attention to this so that you don't over-stretch and / or tear your dough.

NOTE: If you do tear your dough, don't stress. Take your fingers and smush the affected area back together.

Your dough should naturally be a bit thicker around the edge (crust!). If not, don't worry.

It will stretch out to about 10 inches diameter. An inch one way or the other is fine. The thinner the pie, the less poofy it will be. Conversely, a thicker pie will usually create more poofy pockets of airy love.

#### Step 4

Lay it down. Take your stretched dough and gently lay it on your floured pizza peel. Adjust the dough as necessary to get the shape you want (probably circular). Now it's time to add your toppings. You could do a simple kind of thing with a layer of red sauce and a layer of cheese. Or, add some pepperoni on top of that cheese. Or, go crazy with sauce, cheese, onions and pepperoni for another pizza win. Whatever you want really.

NOTE: Do not take your sweet time. Don't rush, but don't go visit the neighbor and enjoy a coffee while your dough is sitting on the pizza peel. That semolina flour will do a great job of getting your dough off the peel and into the oven. However, over time, it will hydrate and be absorbed by the dough itself. That will cause it to stick to your pizza peel. That will make you sad. Pizza should make you happy. You get it.

## *Toppin' It*

*A study of why you should not use the entire warehouse-sized pack of pepperoni.*

When it comes to toppings, less is better. You may be tempted to go crazy with the cheese because cheese is awesome. Don't! Sauce, it's red like a stop sign, which should be a sign to stop before you add too much! Veggies, meats and whatever else..... ease up. For example, sauce should cover the dough but not be so thick that you can't see any dough underneath. Cheese should be applied evenly but not so thick that you can't see any sauce underneath. Why? Because the dough you are about to top is a strong dough. It can and should be stretched thin. If you pile too much stuff on top, stuff that probably has some water or fat content, you will get mushy, floppy pizza. It goes without saying that mushy & floppy should not be used to describe pizza.

## *Bakin' It*

*Let's launch this & get baked!*

We Are Go for Launch

Checklist review:

- ✓ Oven preheated for about an hour to nuclear hot? Check.
- ✓ Pizza shaped, topped and looking oh so fine? Check.
- ✓ Let's launch this!

### Step 1

Pick up your pizza peel with both hands and give it a gentle little shake in both the back & forth and side to side directions. This should cause the dough to slide around a bit on the peel. This helps ensure that when you launch into the oven, it will slide off as intended. If you notice an area sticking, you can try to fix it before you go to the oven.

### Step 2

Walk over to your oven with your pizza peel in hand and open the oven door. Alternately, open the oven door then grab your peel and walk back over to the oven.

NOTE: If you have never had your oven nuclear hot, it will be a major blast of heat that would make Prometheus proud. When opening your oven door, please stand off to the side. Open the door just a crack and wait a few seconds. This allows the initial burst of eyebrow searing heat to escape before you fully open the door.

### Step 3

Take your pizza peel and place the end of it towards the far side (back of oven) on your pizza stone. It should be resting on or no more than an inch above your stone. Gently shake your peel from front to back (away from you / towards you) to scoot the dough off the peel and onto the stone. Once your dough makes first contact with the stone, it should sort of stick to the stone. This will help you to get the rest of the dough off the peel. You may be able to gently remove the peel from under the dough with one continuous motion. Or, you may have to continue scooting the dough off the peel with gentle back & forth shakes. Keep your peel at a reasonable angle. Too high of an angle and you'll lose toppings. Too shallow of an angle and the raw pie may not be able to scoot off. After the whole thing is on the stone, you can close your oven door and start the timer. The actual launch process should not take more than about 10 seconds. As with many things, practice will help you improve over time. Score! Another excuse to make more pizza!

### *Cookin' It*

*Is it ready? Is it done? Are we there yet?*

Cooking times will vary depending on several different factors such as: oven temperature, surface used to cook pizza, gas or electric, convection or not, etc. Assuming a standard home kitchen oven, your pizza should be ready in ABOUT 5 – 7 minutes. For your first few bakes, it's a good idea to keep a watchful eye on the pizza as it cooks. Please use your oven light for this and do NOT open the oven. You want all that nuclear hot heat to cook your pizza, not warm your kitchen.

One way to tell your pizza is done is when the top begins to brown. Your cheese should be bubbling and just turning dark in spots. The crust of the pizza, especially the puffy parts, should be browned and hopefully a bit charred in spots.



## *Removin' It*

*Getting from the oven to your tummy.*

It's time to remove your pizza. Again, while standing off to the side open the oven door just a crack for the first few seconds. There are several ways to go about removing your pizza depending on your available equipment. One way is to use a metal pizza peel. Carefully slide/scoot it under the pizza, remove and set on a wire rack or pizza pan. Another method is to use a spatula / flipper / turner thingy with a sheet pan or rigid cutting board. Take the spatula, slide it under the pizza and gently pull it onto the pan / board. It is recommended to allow your pizza a few minutes to cool before slicing. This allows the pizza to go from nuclear hot to very hot, hopefully decreasing the chance of scalding your mouth and obliterating your taste buds. The brief rest also allows the crust to "soften", giving a New York style pizza experience. On the other hand, if you are okay with shoving molten sauce & cheese into your mouth and like a little crunch in your crust, then slice that up and have at it. After all, Doctor Dough isn't your parents, so you do you.