

OVERVIEW

I will be making Chicago style deep dish pizzas, much in the style of Gino's East. This was my favorite deep dish when I lived there and since moving to Phoenix nearly ten years ago I began a quest to try and duplicate this glorious pie. First, here is a cell phone picture of Gino's East sausage pizza from my most recent trip a few weeks back.

The pizza, at least at this location, has changed in the past couple years-and not for the better. The crust is drier and the once revered sausage puck is now paper thin. So I guess this won't be a copycat recipe, per se, but rather my favorite way to enjoy an iconic piece of nostalgia.

This recipe will yield two 9" cake pan pizzas; I'll be doing one sausage and one spinach pizza. I browned ~3/4lb. of hot Italian sausage removed from the casings and broken up into crumbles. Once browned, remove the sausage from the pot and let drain on paper towels then refrigerate. For the spinach, I simply thawed a bag of frozen spinach and squeezed out as much water as I possibly could. You can add whatever toppings you'd like but I'd advise to cook meats and vegetables first, else you risk a soggy pie. And what on Earth is worse than that??

SAUCE

The sauce will top the pizza, unlike thin pizzas. This is a very chunky and somewhat salty sauce.

1 medium onion, diced
6 garlic cloves, pressed
Two 28 oz. cans diced tomatoes-I used Safeway's San Marzano style strips w/basil
1 t. dried oregano
1 t. dried basil
½ t. granulated garlic
2 bay leaves
S & P to taste-again, don't be shy

After removing the cooked sausage, I simply use the same pot to make the sauce. If you want you can substitute a second pot with ~1T. olive oil. Saute onions and garlic for about five minutes. Add tomatoes and spices and simmer for two hours. Remove from heat, remove bay leaves, and let it set.

DOUGH

1 c. warm (100-110 degrees) beer-I used MGD. Normally I like Leinenkugel's Honey Weiss but after searching in vain at four stores I concluded it wasn't in the cards this time.
1 package or 2 1/4 t. yeast
3/4 c. yellow cornmeal
1 t. salt
1 t. sugar
1/4 c. olive oil
2 T. melted butter
2-3 c. flour

First, take the cornmeal and grind in a coffee grinder (and not one that is used for grinding coffee) rather thoroughly. You want this to be almost a fine powder; otherwise the crust will have a gritty texture.

Sift the cornmeal into mixer bowl of your Kitchen Aid mixer. Now, using the whisk attachment combine all ingredients except flour to the cornmeal and whisk for 15 minutes.

Change out the whisk attachment for the dough hook and add one cup of flour to the bowl and combine well. Continue to add flour a quarter cup at a time until combined. You'll know the dough is ready as your mixer starts to 'rock' and the dough will not stick to your hands. You may not need all three cups, or you may need more. Properly made dough will not need any flour when kneading or rolling.

Now knead for 5 minutes on your countertop and you'll oil your mixer bowl and return the dough to it to rise. Wet a few paper towels and cover the mixer bowl, and put in your oven with the light on (that's enough heat for the dough to rise). The dough ball should double in size which should take about an hour.

Punch the dough down and divide in half. Roll out and place in two buttered 9" cake pans paying careful attention to drape the dough over the rim of the pan a bit. The dough is fairly elastic and will fall off the walls of the pan when par-baking otherwise (as illustrated by the pics of the sausage pizza). Poke some holes in the bottom with a fork, you will need to keep an eye while in the oven for more forking opportunities ☺ If you see the bottom puffing up, it's time to fork. You'll likely have some overdone edges but I just break or cut them off.

Par-bake the crust in a 400 degree oven for 15 minutes. You'll then add a LOT of mozzarella cheese, about a pound grated depending on how deep your pan is. Finding good mozzarella is not the easiest pursuit here, I'd avoid store brands as they have just about zero flavor. My mozzarella of choice is Supremo Italiano whole milk available at Restaurant Depot. And by all means, grate your own and forget the pre-shredded stuff. Press down to condense and make room for the toppings. Once the pizzas have the toppings, add a generous layer of the chunky sauce.

Bake pizzas at 400 for 30 minutes. Remove from oven and let the pizzas rest for 15 minutes before serving.