

USING YOUR BAKING STONE

The stone is made with the finest heat-retaining clays available, fired at over 2000°F to give it strength and longevity. With repeated use, it will harden and actually improve baking. It is handmade and will sometimes have a rough edge, which can be smoothed very easily with a file, sandpaper, or an ordinary stone or rock.



This natural baking stone is designed to optimally bake dough for breads and pizzas.

To utilize the even heat of the stone in baking high-fat foods like cookies and turnovers, use a rimmed cookie sheet on the stone, or on the rack above it, but never place such foods directly on the stone.

Tips and Precautions on Using your Baking Stone

1. Wash the stone with hot water and scrub it clean before first use. Do not use soap or detergents, as the stone is porous and may retain the soap and its flavors.
2. Never submerge the stone completely in water.
3. Handle the stone carefully. Although it is heavy and relatively durable, it will probably break or chip if dropped.
4. Sprinkle the preheated stone liberally with cornmeal to prevent sticking.
5. Do not bake cookies, turnovers or other foods with significant fat content directly on the stone. The fats will soak into the stone, imparting a burnt flavor and emitting noxious smoke and fumes. A ½"-high rimmed cookie sheet containing higher-fat foods may be placed directly on the stone, or on the rack above it.
6. It is acceptable to leave the stone in the oven while baking in other modes. You may either set the baking dish directly on the stone or on a rack position above the stone. This will not decrease baking performance, but may increase pre-heat times.
7. When baking on multiple racks, it is best to remove the stone beforehand, as the pan closest to it will brown more on the bottom than pans on the racks above.

8. Turn off the oven and let the stone cool completely before handling it. Then remove it from the oven and clean any stuck-on foods. Usually a rinse (do not soak it) under hot water and a scrub brush will make it clean.

9. Although the stone can easily withstand the high temperatures of the oven self-cleaning cycle, it may discolor the rack beneath it.

10. It is better to allow the stone to cool before handling. If you must handle it while it's hot, be sure to use very thick oven mitts or potholders to prevent severe burns. Make sure you have a safe, heat-resistant place to set the stone before you lift it.

11. The stone will stain after repeated use. This is normal and will not affect its performance or baking capabilities.

12. If accumulation of oil on the stone is heavy, it may cause smoking and create odors. A scouring pad or brush will remove most burnt-on bits. If staining is deep, you may thoroughly sand the stone with emery paper or an electric sander to clean the stone.

13. To keep food hot on the stone while serving, always use heavy oven mitts or potholders while handling the stone, and have a heat-resistant safe space ready in your serving area before you move the stone.

14. To prevent marring the surface of the stone, never use sharp objects to cut the food while it is still on the stone. Use scissors instead, or move the food to a metal tray before cutting.

Baking Instructions

1. Place the stone in the middle of the bottom-most rack.
2. Pre-heat the oven to the desired temperature, and allow an additional 15 minutes or more for the stone to become evenly heated throughout its mass.
3. Before placing the dough shell on the pre-heated stone, sprinkle the stone liberally and evenly with cornmeal.
4. Place the dough shell on a pizza peel or cookie sheet after sprinkling it with corn meal, and slide it onto the stone.
5. When baking is done, use a pizza peel or cookie sheet to remove the food from the stone.
6. Turn off the oven and let the stone cool completely before handling it.

PERFECT PIZZA DOUGH

Yield: Two 13-14" pizza shells

1 pkg dried yeast (or 1 cake compressed yeast)
3 ½ cups flour
1 cup water
3 tbsp olive oil
1 tsp salt
Cornmeal

Dissolve yeast in water. For dry yeast, use very warm water (105-115°F); for compressed yeast, use lukewarm water (80-90°F). After dissolving, let stand for 5-10 minutes.

Combine flour and salt in a large mixing bowl. Make a well in the center of the flour and gradually work half the yeast mixture into the well with your fingers. Add 2 of the 3 tbsp of olive oil. Gradually work in the remaining yeast mixture. Add a tbsp or more of water, if needed, to make the dough soft and smooth.

Turn the dough out onto a flat surface and knead vigorously for at least 10 minutes - push dough away from you, then fold it back toward you - until it is smooth and elastic with a dull sheen. Or, using a dough hook on an electric stand mixer, knead for 7-8 minutes; don't worry, you can't over-knead it. Shape the dough into a ball and place in a large greased bowl, turning the dough over to grease the top. Cover with a damp cloth or plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until it has doubled in bulk, about 45-60 minutes.

Divide the dough in half.* On a lightly floured surface, roll each half into a 13-14" circle about 1/8" thick, leaving a thick ridge around the edge so the topping will not spill over. Sprinkle cornmeal liberally over a pizza paddle. Fold the dough in half, then in half again. Carefully transfer it to the center of the paddle and unfold. Rub a tablespoon of olive oil over the dough surface. Top with your favorite filling.

Slide the pizza from the paddle onto the pre-heated stone in the oven (see Baking Instructions) by holding the paddle directly over the stone, then giving a slight forward movement and a hard backward jerk toward you.

* Dough may be frozen for later use in several ways:
To Freeze Unbaked Dough: Shape the dough into balls, wrap with plastic wrap and freeze. Let thaw completely at room temperature before rolling out.
To Freeze Parbaked Shells: Roll out as described, bake on a pre-heated stone for 8-10 minutes. Let cool. Wrap and freeze. Topping may be added before wrapping. No need to defrost before final baking. Bake the frozen filled shells for 30-35 minutes, or until the crust is crisp and brown.

PASQUALE'S

FAVORITE PIZZA TOPPING

Yield: Fills two 13-14" pizza shells

1 tbsp olive oil
¼ cup grated Parmesan or Romano cheese
1 clove garlic, thinly-sliced vertically
1½ tsp dried oregano
1 large onion, chopped
1½ tsp dried basil
1½ lbs sweet Italian sausage, removed from casing
1 tbsp salt
1½ tsp fennel seed
1 lb mozzarella cheese, grated
2 28-oz cans Italian plum tomatoes, chopped and drained well

In a large, deep frying pan, lightly brown the garlic in oil – do not burn. Discard garlic. Add crumbled sausage, onion and fennel to the oil in the pan and sauté over medium-high heat until the sausage is browned. Drain all liquid from the pan. Add well-drained tomatoes, grated cheese, oregano, basil, and salt. Simmer over low heat, uncovered, for 25 minutes.

Spoon half the topping onto each shell using a slotted spoon. Sprinkle mozzarella cheese on top. Bake as directed.

LOW-FAT

ROASTED VEGETABLE PIZZA TOPPING

Yield: Fills one 13-14" pizza shell

1 cup eggplant, peeled and cubed
¼ cup chopped scallions
1 lb fresh plum tomatoes, each cut into 8 pieces
1 cup coarsely chopped zucchini
1 tsp dried thyme
1 tsp dried oregano
4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced (optional)
Salt and pepper to taste
3 tbsp olive oil
3 tbsp fresh-grated Parmesan cheese
Cornmeal

Put all the ingredients, except the cheese and olive oil, into a large baking pan. Drizzle on the olive oil and toss well. Roast vegetables in a pre-heated 425°F oven for 5 minutes. Remove from the oven and toss the vegetables. Return the pan to the oven for 5-7 minutes. Remove the pan and allow it to cool.

Spread vegetables evenly over a 13-14" pizza shell. Sprinkle the cheese on top. Bake in the pre-heated oven for 10-15 minutes until the vegetables and cheese brown slightly.

MARY'S PRIMA PIZZA TOPPING

Yield: Fills two 13-14" pizza shells

1 16-oz can Italian tomato puree
1 tsp sugar
1 tsp basil
1 tsp oregano
2 tbsp grated Parmesan or Romano cheese
¾ lb ground beef
1 tbsp olive oil
3 medium onions, chopped
2 large green peppers, chopped
1 lb mozzarella cheese, grated
Cornmeal

Pre-heat the baking stone in the oven at 425°F.

Simmer the first five ingredients (tomato puree, sugar, basil, oregano, and Parmesan or Romano cheese) in a sauté pan for 20-25 minutes.

In a separate sauté pan, brown the ground beef. Remove the beef with a slotted spoon to a plate and set aside. In the same sauté pan, add olive oil and lightly sauté the onions and peppers in the oil without overcooking.

Spoon half the tomato sauce on top of each pizza shell. Top with the pepper and onion mixture. Sprinkle on the mozzarella cheese and cooked ground beef.

Sprinkle the pre-heated stone with cornmeal. Bake the pizza on the stone for 10-15 minutes, or until the cheese is slightly browned and bubbly.

AUNT ELVA'S PIZZA AL FUNGHI TOPPING

Yield: Fills two 13-14" pizza shells

2 16-oz cans of pizza sauce
2 tbsp grated Parmesan or Romano cheese
1 lb fresh mushrooms
1 lb fresh mozzarella cheese, grated
2 tbsp olive oil
Cornmeal

Pre-heat the baking stone in the oven at 425°F.

Simmer pizza sauce and Parmesan or Romano cheese in a saucepan for 20-25 minutes.

Wash mushrooms and slice thinly. Spoon half the pizza sauce onto each pizza shell. Add mushroom caps evenly over the sauce. Top with mozzarella cheese. Sprinkle olive oil over the pizzas.

Sprinkle the pre-heated stone with cornmeal. Bake the pizza on the stone for 10-15 minutes, or until the cheese is slightly browned and bubbly.

Recipes are by courtesy of



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**Old Stone
Oven**
Baking Stones

ITALIAN BREAD

Yield: Two loaves

1 pkg active dry yeast
1 cup warm water (105-115°F)
2 cups warm water
1 tbsp salt
6-7 cups flour
Cornmeal
2 tbsp butter

Dissolve the yeast in 1 cup of warm water, then let stand for 5 minutes. Dissolve the salt in 2 cups of warm water. Put 5 cups of flour in a large bowl, add wet ingredients, and mix well. Add enough remaining flour to make a workable dough.

Turn out the dough onto a lightly floured board and knead for 10 minutes until the dough is smooth and elastic, and has a satiny sheen. Or, using a dough hook with an electric stand mixer, knead for 7-8 minutes.

Place in a greased bowl and turn over once to grease the other side. Cover with a cloth or plastic wrap. Place the bowl in a warm, draft-free place, and let rise until it has doubled in bulk, about 1-1½ hours.

Turn dough out onto the wood board and knead for 5 minutes more. Divide the dough into 2 pieces and round each piece into a ball. Return them to the greased bowl, cover and let rise until they have doubled in bulk, about 46-60 minutes.

Separate the pieces of dough (they will come apart). Roll each ball into an oblong shape using both hands. Shape into Italian-style loaves. Sprinkle cornmeal on a pizza paddle. Place the loaves on the paddle, cover, and let rise until doubled, about 30 minutes.

Brush the top of the loaves with melted butter. Make one long slash, about 1" deep, nearly the entire length of the loaf (a single-edge razor blade works best).

Pre-heat the baking stone in the oven at 375°F, and allow 15 or more additional minutes before proceeding.

Slide the loaves from the paddle onto the stone. Bake for 50-60 minutes until golden brown and the bread sounds hollow when tapped.

To store unused bread, cut into several sections and freeze. Before serving, heat the sections in an oven.

PORTUGUESE SWEET BREAD

Yield: Three 8" round loaves

2 pkg active dry yeast
½ cup warm water (105-115°F)
1 cup milk
½ cup butter or margarine, softened
6 eggs
1 ½ cups sugar
8-9 cups flour
2 tsp salt

In a large bowl, sprinkle yeast into warm water. Scale milk and add butter. Cool to lukewarm.

Meanwhile, beat eggs and sugar until light. Add milk mixture to eggs, then stir into yeast mixture. Gradually beat in 3 cups of flour with a wooden spoon. Add salt. Stir in enough additional flour to make a soft dough that is workable and leaves the sides of the bowl.

Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead for 10 minutes. Add additional flour as necessary. Knead until smooth and elastic.

Place in a greased bowl and turn over once to grease the other side. Cover with a cloth or plastic wrap. Place the bowl in a warm, draft-free place, and let rise until it has doubled in bulk, about 1-1½ hours. Punch the dough down, and then let it rest for 10 minutes. Divide the dough into thirds.

Shape each third into a ball. Using your hands, flatten each ball until it is about 8" diameter. Press into 3 greased 8" round cake pans. Cover and let rise in warm, draft-free place, until it has doubled in bulk, about 1 hour.

Pre-heat the oven to 375°F. Place the pans on the baking stone, making sure they are not touching each other or the sides of the oven walls. Bake for approximately 30 minutes, or until they are well browned. Brush with melted butter while still hot.

Cool and slice before serving.