

My Genovese Nonna's

Pizza al Taglio

Genova is known for its slices of pizza (pizza al taglio or 'pizza by the slice') paired with an endless variety of gourmet toppings. It's basically a focaccia dough with toppings. We grew up with this type of pizza; each Sunday we piled into the car, electric with excitement for Nonna's homemade pizza and an afternoon of fun. Eating it with a boisterous family around a big table is best, but it's also delicious for school lunches and leftovers.

MAKES 2 TRAYS/PANS OF PIZZA

DOUGH

1 x 10 g packet instant dry yeast
400 ml water (room temperature)
15 ml sugar
1 kg cake wheat flour or bread flour, plus
extra to dust your hands
45 ml extra virgin olive oil, plus extra
Salt and pepper to taste

TOPPINGS

2 x 800 g cans Mutti whole peeled
tomatoes, seasoned with oregano, salt
and pepper, and smoothly blended
500 g good-quality mozzarella, grated
200 g Gypsy ham, cubed, or sliced salami
50 g red onion, sliced
50 g red pepper, sliced
100 g mushrooms, sliced
50 g green or kalamata olives,
pitted and halved
10 g fresh basil, plus extra to garnish
2 balls fresh fior di latte
mozzarella, sliced
Salt and pepper to taste

1. For the dough, sprinkle the yeast into the water and add the sugar. Allow to dissolve until it bubbles slightly (5–10 minutes).
2. Place the flour in a large bowl. Add the water and yeast mixture, the 45 ml olive oil, salt and pepper. Mix together and knead until you are left with a spongy dough.
3. Oil a large container (at least twice as big as the dough) and place the dough in it. Cover with a lid or cling wrap and a blanket or tea towel. Place it in the sun (or the warmest spot in your home) for 3 hours until bubbly (or let it rise overnight).
4. Grease two pizza pans or ovenproof dishes well. Divide the dough in half, and spread each half in the pans (use your hands to stretch it until it fills the pans evenly), then leave to rest for 15–30 minutes.
5. Preheat the oven to 200°C.
6. Meanwhile, prepare your toppings of choice. Evenly spread a thin layer of olive oil all over the surface of the pizzas leaving the outer 2 cm clear. Do the same with the blended tomatoes and then add a layer of grated mozzarella.
7. Once these basics are done, be creative with the toppings! We like Gypsy ham, red onion, red pepper, mushrooms, olives and basil, but don't be afraid to experiment. Evenly disperse them on top of the pizza and finish with slices of fior di latte mozzarella, salt and pepper.
8. Bake for 10 minutes at 200°C, then reduce the temperature to 180°C and bake for another 15–20 minutes. Garnish with fresh basil leaves.

Tip Topping varieties are endless. Bianca bases (no tomato purée) with roasted onion, thinly sliced potato, rosemary and taleggio cheese are very popular in Italy, but South Africans tend to prefer a tomato base.

