

NAPOLETANA PIZZA: PART I - THE DOUGH

What is the difference between a good and a great pizza? All things being equal - THE BAKE!



When the day started, little did I know it would require more 'Forte' (Strength), 'Via' (Go) and listening to 'No' (a word which with the slap of a wrist needs no translation in to any language) then I can remember needing in a long time. We began the morning making dough by hand. I think to myself "no problem." I've made dough thousands of times before and many of those times by hand. But it was never like this!

Enzo first demonstrates this process. The pizzaiolo kitchen does not contain a rolling pin, dough sheeter, or dough press. All of these devices are far too aggressive and change the airy texture required of Neapolitan Pizza. If you are sincerely in search

of the real thing get ready to use your hands, fingers and patience. His astute demonstration takes about 40 minutes, most of it kneading the dough. Then it's my turn.

Instruction	Ingredient	Brand / Description	Metric	Weight	Baker's Formula
A	Water	Semi-warm 75-80°F	1 liter	34 oz	53%
A	Yeast	Compressed Cake	5g	0.2 oz	0.3%
A	Sea Salt		50g	1.8 oz	2.8%
B	Caputo Flour	High quality protein	1.8 kg	4 lbs	100%

Yields: 14 Dough Balls / 200g / 7 oz

INSTRUCTIONS

Combine (A) In a large mixing bowl combine the Water and Sea Salt. Mix with fingers until dissolved.



Image 1a

Crumble the Yeast (image 1b) with fingers into Salt Water mixture. Mix until completely dissolved.



Image 1b

Mixing (B) Add Caputo Flour gradually, mixing with right or left hand continuously until the dough no longer sticks to the bowl - this stage takes about 5-7 minutes of vigorous work and it is best to have someone else pour in the flour (Image at left). Continue to slowly add flour. If it begins to feel lumpy stop adding flour, continue the mixing until the lumps disappear and then continue adding flour (Image 2a).

Resting After all the flour is incorporated and/or the mixing bowl sides and bottom come clean and the dough begins to have a smooth feeling - stop mixing (Image 3a).

Take the large dough ball out of the bowl and place on a lightly floured surface and cover for 5 minutes with a damp cloth (Image 3b). Note: Enjoy this time. Catch your breath, you'll need/knead it!

Kneading Grab the large dough ball on one side, bang it down hard on your table 2 or 3 times until it is about 15 inches long. Place the dough perpendicular to you hips (Image 4a).

Starting at the end closest to you knead with both fists. Slam your right fist into the right side of the dough at a 90 degree angle rolling your fist up and over the dough (Image 4b). Repeat this step with alternating fists until you reach the end of the dough and then starting where you just ended, come back down the dough. Repeat this process until the dough stretches too far away from you to comfortably knead. At this time, starting at the end closest to you, roll the dough up - like a jelly roll (Image 4c). Get a firm grip on one side of the open sides and bang the dough hard down on your table 2 or 3 times until it stretches to about 15 inches.

Begin the kneading process over again. Knead in 5 minute intervals with a 1 minute rest in between. Continue kneading intervals until the dough turns lighter in color and smoother in texture. Approximately 30 minutes. When you reach this stage shape the dough back into a single large ball and cover with a damp cloth for 15 minutes (Image 4d).

Shaping/ Pinching Okay, I hope you broke a good sweat kneading. This next part, while seemingly simple, drove me nuts! However the process is quite unique and the end result is an important character and texture difference in the finished Neapolitan Pizza.

Our goal is to pinch and shape this large dough ball into 7-8 ounce dough balls. Begin by cutting a 3 inch wide strip of dough (Image 5a). Lightly wrap your forefinger and thumb around a 7-8 ounce portion then bring the middle fingers of your opposite hand gently but firmly over the top of the dough stuffing and stretching any rough edges under the forefinger and thumb (Image 5b). As middle fingers exit pinch this dough ball off by placing thumb on top of forefinger and squeezing hard (Image 5c).



Image 2a



Image 3a



Image 3b



Image 4a

Pinch hard enough for the dough ball to fall off without help from your other hand (Image 5d). My right hand was slapped numerous times for twisting of f the dough ball. These dough balls are placed in a lightly floured dough box (Image below). When the box is full, flour is lightly sifted over the dough balls and then the box is covered.

Proofing Depending on your environment (room temperature) proofing will require 4-8 hours, before the dough is actually ready to open and bake. This dough may be retarded overnight if you like.

Throughout my training day with maestro Enzo Coccia I wanted to ask “Why? Why? Why? Enzo, why do you shape your dough this way?” The answer, as I learned for myself, is Neapolitan pizza is light and airy, this method allows a knowledgeable Pizzaiolo to make and use his dough the same day; it helps the dough temper and mature more evenly.

Enzo believes shaping by hand on a tabletop stretches the dough into a tight ball that requires over night aging to be successful. Of course while I struggled with this process Enzo knocked off 3 whole boxes of dough in minutes. Practice Makes Perfect.



Image 4b



Image 5a



Image 4c



Image 4d



Image 5b



Image 5c



Image 5d

