

Bret's New York-Style Pizza Sauce

This is my attempt to re-create the pizza sauce I remember from growing up near Buffalo, NY. I remember the sauce being less salty, more bright and tangy (but not spicy hot). The challenge is that we can't know the balance of the sauce in the pot: the proof is in the finished pizza, once the sauce is applied to the dough and topped with cheese.

Ingredients:

1 28-ounce can whole peeled Italian tomatoes	1 pinch each: fennel seed, caraway seed
1½ tablespoons butter	1 pinch red pepper flakes
1 tablespoon olive oil	1 pinch each (optional): nutmeg, ground cloves, allspice
1 clove garlic, micro-grated	1 tablespoon brown sugar (white sugar will do)
1 teaspoon dried basil	1 bay leaf
1 teaspoon dried oregano	salt
½ teaspoon dried onion powder	

Process tomatoes and juice through food processor or blender until puréed. (Strain seeds for smoother texture, if you like.) Grate garlic, crush fennel and caraway, and measure out the dry herbs.

The goal is to reduce moisture and concentrate flavors without overcooking, so we want to maximize the surface area by using a large pot. Start by heating the butter and olive oil gently until the butter is just melted. Add the garlic and sauté briefly (15 seconds or so). Add the dry herbs and stir a few seconds more. Be careful not to burn the seasonings.

Add tomato purée, brown sugar, bay leaf, and a pinch of salt. Bring to a simmer, then reduce heat to lowest setting (bubbles should barely break the surface). Cook uncovered for about 45 minutes, stirring occasionally. Season to taste with additional salt if required (not too much: it should taste a bit under-salted). Remove bay leaf.

Allow to cool. For best flavor, refrigerate overnight. Allow sauce to come to room temperature before spreading on pizza to avoid gummy dough texture. Use within 2 weeks or freeze.

Makes enough for at least three 16-inch pizzas.

New York-Style Pizza Dough

Ingredients:

12 ounces warm (not hot) water	19 ounces (by weight) bread flour
1/2 teaspoon sugar	2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon active dry yeast	2 teaspoons olive oil

Dissolve sugar into the warm water and stir in yeast. Weigh flour into mixer bowl and stir in the salt. Once bubbly, pour yeast into the flour, and stir with the dough hook on low until fully incorporated. Cover and rest 30 minutes. Add the olive oil and knead for 8 to 10 minutes until smooth and elastic. Divide dough in half and form each half into a ball. Brush lightly with oil, and place dough balls into sealable containers (at least 1½ quarts each). Refrigerate overnight.

Turn a dough ball out onto a floured surface. Cover with plastic wrap and allow the dough to come to room temperature (about 1 to 2 hours). Place a pizza stone on a rack set to the upper third of the oven. Pre-heat to 475° F for *at least* 30 minutes so that the stone can get sufficiently hot.

Start lightly pressing a ridge for the crust around the dough's circumference. Use fingers (not palms) to press into the center of the dough, starting to flatten and stretch it. Flip the dough over and continue stretching with just the fingers. Pick up the dough and gently toss between hands, rotating the dough, letting gravity stretch it. Keep flipping and stretching the dough until the disk reaches the desired size.

Generously dust a pizza peel with corn meal and reform the dough's disk onto it. Working quickly to avoid sticking, add sauce, then cheese, then toppings. Jiggle the peel to fully loosen the pizza. Open the oven and jiggle and slide the pizza off the peel onto the pizza stone. Bake until the cheese is bubbly and the crust is browned (7 to 12 minutes).

Topping Notes: Sauce should be room temperature to prevent a gummy dough texture. Freshly-shredded low-moisture whole-milk mozzarella congeals best. Slice vegetable toppings thinly so that they can be cooked in the short bake time. Pre-cook meats and toppings with high moisture content (e.g., mushrooms, fresh-sliced tomato). Broil for a minute or two toward the end of the bake to add a slight char.

Yield: two 1-pound dough balls for two 16-inch pizzas