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DIVAS ON A DIME

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PHOTO CREDIT: [www.JasonCoblentz.com](http://www.JasonCoblentz.com)

PHOTO CAPTION: A simple homemade crust makes pizza night feel both affordable and special.



## Homemade Pizza Night Starts With Simple Dough

There's something really satisfying about making pizza dough from scratch.

Maybe it's because pizza has become one of those "special occasion" meals for many families. Between delivery fees, rising restaurant prices and the mysterious extra charges that appear out of thin air, pizza night can cost nearly as much as a decent steak dinner used to. Ah, the good old days.

The good news? Pizza dough is surprisingly simple to make at home.

Flour. Water. Yeast. Olive oil. Sugar. Salt. That's it.

No stand mixer required. No dough hook. No dramatic tossing of dough over your head while opera music plays in the background. (Although I highly recommend you try that at least once.) Just one bowl, a spoon and about 10 minutes of actual hands-on effort.

The rest of the time, the yeast does the work while you go about your day being the sort of person who casually has homemade pizza dough rising on the counter.

And honestly? That feels rather fabulous.

Homemade pizza dough costs a fraction of prepared crusts or takeout, and the flavor is delicious. The crust bakes up chewy, crisp around the edges and fills the kitchen with the

aroma of fresh bread.

It's also very versatile. Use it for traditional pizzas, flatbreads, calzones, breadsticks, garlic knots or individual pizzas everyone can customize.

If you've never worked with yeast before, pizza dough is a great place to start. It's surprisingly forgiving, and once you see how easy it is, you'll find yourself eyeing leftovers and thinking, "That could totally become a pizza."

### EASY PIZZA DOUGH

Yield: 6-8 servings

Total Time: 1 hour 30 mins.

1 1/2 cups lukewarm water (about 110 degrees)

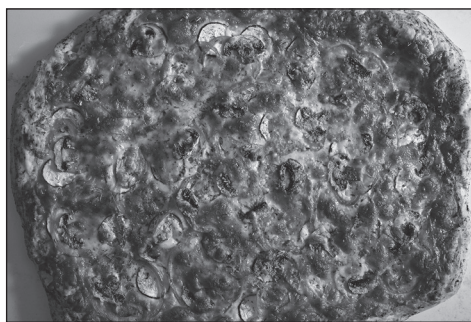
2 packets (1/4 ounce each) instant dry yeast

2 teaspoons granulated sugar

1/4 cup olive oil, plus more for bowl and drizzling

1 teaspoon coarse salt

4 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for work surface



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Pour water into a large bowl. Sprinkle yeast over the top and let stand until foamy, about 5 minutes. Whisk in sugar, olive oil and salt. Stir in flour until a sticky dough forms.

Lightly oil another large bowl. Transfer dough to bowl and drizzle lightly with olive oil. Cover and let

rise in a warm place until doubled in size, about 1 hour.

Turn dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead gently two to three times. Form into a round and let rest 10 minutes.

One batch of dough makes a large round pizza, two medium pizzas, individual pizzas or can be stretched to fit a 15-by-21-inch three-quarter sheet pan.

Bake topped pizza at 475 F degrees until crust is golden and toppings are bubbly, about 12 to 15 minutes depending on thickness.

For a well-balanced large pizza, use about 1/2-2/3 cup sauce, 1 1/2 to 2 cups shredded cheese, and about 2 cups total toppings. It can be tempting to pile on every topping in sight, but a lighter hand produces a crispier crust and better flavor. Think "picture-perfect pizza" rather than "edible yard sale."

For the pizza pictured, I used about 1/2 cup sauce, 12 ounces freshly shredded mozzarella, 3 ounces salami, thinly sliced zucchini, mushrooms, red bell pepper, sweet onion and a sprinkle of Parmesan cheese. The vegetables roast and caramelize as the pizza bakes, creating plenty of flavor without requiring a mountain of toppings.

Pulling a homemade pizza from the oven is delicious, but the satisfaction of making it yourself is the real reward.

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*Lifestyle expert Patti Diamond is the penny-pinching, party-planning, recipe developer and content creator of the website Divas On A Dime — Where Frugal, Meets Fabulous! Visit Patti at [www.divasonadime.com](http://www.divasonadime.com) and join the conversation on Facebook at [DivasOnADimeDotCom](https://www.facebook.com/DivasOnADimeDotCom). Email Patti at [divapatti@divasonadime.com](mailto:divapatti@divasonadime.com)*

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