

Neapolitan Basil Bliss Pizza

Experience the authentic taste of Italy with this classic Neapolitan Margherita pizza, featuring a light and airy crust with characteristic leopard spots, a vibrant San Marzano tomato sauce, fresh mozzarella, and aromatic basil leaves. Simple, elegant, and utterly delicious.

Ingredients

- 500g '00' flour (or high-quality bread flour)
- 325ml lukewarm water
- 10g fine sea salt
- 1g active dry yeast (or 2-3g fresh yeast)
- 1 can (400g) San Marzano tomatoes, crushed by hand
- 250g fresh mozzarella (Fior di Latte or Buffalo mozzarella), torn into pieces
- A handful of fresh basil leaves
- 2-3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Pinch of sea salt (for the sauce)

Instructions

1. ****Prepare the dough:**** In a large bowl, dissolve yeast in lukewarm water. Add flour and salt. Mix until a shaggy dough forms. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface and knead for 10-15 minutes until smooth and elastic. (Alternatively, use a stand mixer with a dough hook for 8-10 minutes).
2. ****First rise:**** Place the dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and let rise at room temperature for 2 hours, or until doubled in size.
3. ****Divide and second rise:**** Gently punch down the dough and divide it into two equal balls. Shape each into a smooth ball. Place them on a lightly floured tray, cover loosely with plastic wrap or a damp cloth, and let rise for another 1-2 hours, or until puffy.
4. ****Preheat oven/pizza oven:**** Place a pizza stone or steel on the top rack of your oven and preheat to the highest possible temperature (usually 250-275°C/480-525°F) for at

least 45-60 minutes. If using a pizza oven, preheat to 400-450°C (750-850°F).

5. ****Prepare toppings:**** If using whole San Marzano tomatoes, crush them by hand in a bowl and season lightly with salt. Tear the fresh mozzarella into small pieces.
6. ****Stretch the dough:**** On a lightly floured surface (semolina flour works well), gently stretch one dough ball from the center outwards, leaving the rim untouched to form the crust. Aim for a 10-12 inch diameter. Avoid using a rolling pin.
7. ****Assemble the pizza:**** Carefully transfer the stretched dough to a floured pizza peel. Spoon the crushed tomatoes evenly over the base, leaving the crust clear. Distribute the torn mozzarella over the sauce. Drizzle with a little extra virgin olive oil.
8. ****Bake:**** Carefully slide the pizza onto the hot pizza stone/steel in the oven. Bake for 5-8 minutes in a home oven, or 60-90 seconds in a pizza oven, rotating halfway if needed, until the crust is puffed and charred in spots, and the cheese is melted and bubbly.
9. ****Finish:**** Remove the pizza from the oven. Immediately scatter fresh basil leaves over the hot pizza. Slice and serve hot. Repeat with the second dough ball.