

Makes six 6-ounce dough balls

5 cups (22 ½ ounces) unbleached all-purpose flour

1 ¾ teaspoons table salt or 3 ¼ teaspoons kosher salt

1 teaspoon instant yeast

1 ¾ cups plus 2 tablespoons cool water (65 degrees Fahrenheit)

1. With a large metal spoon, stir together all the ingredients in a 4-quart bowl or the bowl of an electric stand mixer until combined.
If mixing with an electric mixer, fit it with the dough hook and mix on low speed for about 4 minutes, or until all the flour gathers to form a coarse ball. Let the dough rest for 5 minutes, then mix again on medium-low speed for an additional 2 minutes, or until the dough clears the sides of the bowl and sticks just a little to the bottom. If the dough is too soft and sticky to hold its shape, mix in more flour by the tablespoonful; if it is too stiff or dry, mix in more water by the tablespoonful. The dough should pass the windowpane test.
If mixing by hand, repeatedly dip one of your hands or the spoon into room-temperature water and use it much like a dough hook, working the dough vigorously into a coarse ball as you rotate the bowl with your other hand. As all the flour is incorporated into the ball, about 4 minutes, the dough will begin to strengthen; when this occurs, let the dough rest for 5 minutes and then resume mixing for an additional 2 to 3 minutes, or until the dough is slightly sticky, soft, and supple. If the dough is too soft and sticky to hold its shape, mix in more flour by the tablespoonful; if it is too stiff or dry, mix in more water by the tablespoonful. The dough should pass the windowpane test.
2. Transfer the dough to a floured counter, dust the top of the dough with flour to absorb the surface moisture, and then, working from 4 corners, fold the dough into a ball. Place the ball in a bowl that has been brushed with olive oil, turn the dough to coat it with the oil, and cover the bowl with plastic wrap. Let the dough sit at room temperature for 30 minutes, then put the bowl in the refrigerator overnight. (Or, if you are making the pizzas on the same day, let the dough sit at room temperature for 1 ½ hours, punch it down, reshape it into a ball, return the ball to the bowl, and then cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours.)
3. The next day (or later the same day if refrigerated for only 2 hours), remove the bowl of dough from the refrigerator 2 hours before you plan to make the pizzas. The dough will have expanded somewhat and the gluten will be very relaxed. Using a plastic bowl scraper dipped in water, or using wet hands, gently transfer the dough to a floured counter, trying to degas the dough as little as possible. Using a pastry blade that has been dipped in water, divide it into 6 equal pieces. Gently round each piece into a ball and brush or rub each ball with olive oil. Line a sheet pan with baking parchment or a nonstick silicone baking liner and brush with olive oil. Place each dough ball on the pan and loosely cover the pan with either plastic wrap or a food-grade plastic bag. (If you do not plan to use all the pieces, place the extra ones in individual zippered freezer bags and refrigerate or freeze. Use the refrigerated balls within 2 days and the frozen balls within 3 months.) Allow the dough balls to sit at room temperature for 2 hours before making the pizzas.

Napoletana Pizza Dough Variations

Unless you are seeking DOC status, you will probably not be worried about the rules of *la vera pizza napoletana*. Therefore, you should feel free to vary some of the ingredients or proportions. For instance, if you choose to use bread or high-gluten flour instead of all-purpose flour, add 1 teaspoon olive or vegetable oil for every cup of flour. You may also substitute a small amount, up to 1 tablespoon per cup of flour, of whole-wheat or rye flour for the all-purpose flour. The addition of a small amount of whole-grain flour gives the dough a pleasant country-style quality; many people actually prefer it.