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quick(er) whole grain pizza dough

26 march 2009



I noticed that the recipe for [Lemon Basil Pesto Pizza](#) was getting a lot of hits, and then I remembered how annoyed I get when I click on a recipe at 4:00 pm, looking for something to make for dinner, and see “soak beans overnight” or “marinate chicken at least 8 hours.” We’re busy people, out in the world, doing our busy things, and we don’t always plan ahead. I will tell you that the [12-grain pizza dough](#) is *worth* planning ahead for, but if you need something for dinner tonight, this dough is hardly a sacrifice.

The quickest way to homemade pizza dough is to use white all-purpose flour and quick-rising yeast, which could be made, risen, and ready.

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to-use within an hour. But in bread-making, as in life, every short-cut you take results in a sacrifice; in this case, you are sacrificing taste, not to mention health. The whole grain dough described below can be ready to use in under 2 hours (about 1 hr 45 minutes, total), during which time you can be prepping the other ingredients for your pizza, and is still much more delicious than any pre-made, packaged pizza dough you'll find at the store, and likely better, and better for you, than what is on hand down at the corner pizzeria. With the nutty flavor and [health benefits](#) of whole grains, yet the light texture and ease of use of more traditional white flour dough, this recipe is a winner that you'll want to make again and again.

Adapted from **Basic Pizza Dough** in [Pizza](#) by James McNair.

Whole Grain Pizza Dough

INGREDIENTS

1 and 1/4 cup warm, filtered water (110 – 115 degrees F)
2 heaping tsp (0.5 oz) honey
2 and 1/2 tsp (0.25 oz) [instant yeast](#) OR 1 package (2 and 1/2 tsp, 0.25 oz) active dry yeast
2 cups (9 oz) [Wild Hive](#) whole wheat (bread) flour
1 and 1/4 cups (5.5 oz) [Wild Hive](#) white wheat (all-purpose) flour, plus more for adjustments
scant 1/4 cup (1.5 oz) olive oil
1 tsp sea salt

METHODS

1. If using **instant yeast**, skip to step 2. If using **active dry yeast**, measure filtered water in a small, microwave-safe bowl, and heat on high for 45 seconds to warm water to approximately 115 degrees F. Add honey to the water and stir to dissolve. Sprinkle yeast over the top of the water and mix with a fork until it is a uniform cloudy beige mixture. Let stand for 5-10 minutes, until foam and small bubbles start to form on the surface of the yeast mixture. If the yeast clumps and refuses to mix with the water, or if foam/bubbles never form, then your yeast is too old; throw away the mixture and try again with a fresh packet.
2. Mix the 2 cups (9 oz) of whole wheat bread flour and 1 cup (4.5 oz) of the white wheat all-purpose flour in a medium bowl with the instant yeast.
3. Make a well in the flour and add in the warmed water, or water-yeast mixture, to the flour. Add the salt and olive oil. Mix vigorously with a wooden spoon until all of the flour is hydrated and a soft dough forms. The dough should be very sticky; scrape down the sides of the bowl and dip the wooden spoon into a bowl of water if needed to prevent sticking. If the dough is too wet (it seems more like batter and will not hold a shape), add more flour, 1 tablespoon at a time, incorporating the flour well after each addition, until the dough is very sticky, but a cohesive mass. If the dough seems too dry (it is not sticky, or there are patches of un-incorporated flour) add water, 1 tbsp at a time, until you get a sticky, but cohesive, ball.



4. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured workspace. At this point, the dough will be much too sticky to knead effectively, so in order to avoid having to add a lot of extra flour (and therefore creating a dense, heavy texture in our pizza dough), we will fold the dough, once or twice, then let the dough rest for 20 minutes. Pat the dough out into a rectangle. Flour your hands, rather than the dough, if necessary, and use a dough scraper to loosen from the worksurface.



5. Fold the dough in thirds, like a business letter, then fold down the top and fold up the bottom, until each side has been folded onto itself and the dough is roughly in the shape of a square 'ball.'



Folding the dough.

6. Cover with a clean kitchen towel and allow to rest for 20 minutes.
7. After the 20-minute rest, the dough should be much less sticky and you'll be able to knead effectively. Knead the dough, alternately flouring your hands and/or the work surface (rather than the dough itself), using the heel of your hands to push out and away from you (rather than down into the board) in order to build and stretch long strands of gluten, which will give the dough shape, strength and texture. Keep a medium bowl of fresh, warm water nearby to dip your hands; wet hands making kneading a wet dough much less of a headache. Resist adding too much flour; you want to keep this dough as hydrated as possible – it doesn't need to support a high rise, like a loaf of bread does, so it does not need extensive kneading, and you want high hydration in order to produce nice, airy holes in the crust upon baking. Knead for about 5 minutes, or until the dough feels cohesive and springy, like an elastic, but is still somewhat sticky. If the dough seems to resist you, and is getting tight and elastic but does not yet seem fully kneaded (not totally cohesive, still very sticky), let it rest for 3-4 minutes under the kitchen towel and start again. 012
8. When the dough is ready, form into a loose ball (the dough will likely be too soft at this point to form into a traditional tight ball) and cover with a kitchen towel while you prepare an oiled bowl for rising. Transfer the dough ball to the oiled bowl, turn once to coat the whole ball in olive oil, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and leave in a warm place (75-85 degrees F) to rise. An oven without a pilot light, but with the oven light on, works well (the pilot would be too hot). Or you can put the oven on 250 degrees F for 3 minutes, then turn off, open the door, and allow the dough to rise inside, shutting the oven door after about 5 or 10 minutes. Let the dough rise until 1 and 1/2 times it's starting size (not that traditional 'doubled in bulk'; the bran in whole grains will start to cut the gluten strands as dough continues to rise, so whole grain breads are typically only allowed to rise 1.5 times in size), about 45 minutes.
9. You can use the dough following the initial rise if pressed for time (skip to step 10), but it will benefit in flavor and texture if you allow a short second rise. Punch down the risen dough, folding a few times in the bowl to eliminate large air pockets, and form into a ball. You should notice that it is easier to form a tighter ball this time around. Add more oil to the bowl, if necessary, and coat the dough ball in oil. Replace the plastic wrap and transfer the bowl to the stovetop.
10. Pre-heat the oven as hot as it will go (550 degrees F on my oven). If you do not have a baking stone, set an oven rack at the lowest level and place a baking sheet on it to pre-heat.
11. Allow the dough to rise until it is 1.5 times it's punch-down size. The second rise should take about half the time of the first, or about 25 minutes.
12. Following the second rise, turn the dough out onto a lightly floured worksurface. Cover a pizza peel with a piece of parchment paper, sprinkled with flour or cornmeal. Cut the dough in half with a dough scraper to make two, 12-inch pizza crusts. Pat one dough ball half

into a rough circle, then pick up by the edges and rotate, letting the weight of the dough stretch the circle out to the desired size. This dough will be a little soft and will tear more easily than a traditional, white-flour dough, so use a light touch and try to form the pizza shape with a minimum of handling – the more you manipulate the dough, the wetter/stickier it will get and the more difficult it will get to handle. Besides, a rustic, sort-of-kind-of-circle shape just proves that it was homemade!

13. Spread the shaped dough onto the parchment paper and pile on your favorite toppings. If desired, brush the edges of the dough with olive oil and sprinkle on grated parmesan or [Barat](#) cheese. Slide pizza, on parchment, directly onto a baking stone, or onto the pre-heated baking sheet. Alternatively, you can “par-bake” the pizza crust, then freeze for a quick & easy pizza on a busy weeknight. To par-bake, do not top the shaped pizza dough, just slide it, on the parchment, onto your baking stone or sheet, and cook for 2-3 minutes. You’ll see the edges puff up and maybe just start to turn color; at that point, remove the pizza crust and allow to cool completely on a wire rack before double-wrapping in plastic wrap and storing in your freezer.



Yields enough dough for two, 12-inch pizzas, one 16-inch pizza, two 10-inch calzones, two 9-inch deep-dish pizzas, or one double-crust, 10-inch stuffed pizza.

OPTIONS

1. If you are not local to [Wild Hive Farms](#), I urge you to seek out local flour in your area. It can be hard to find, but ask around; farmer’s markets, local organic food shops and artisanal bakeries are good places to start. Flour is made from grain and can vary enormously, depending on the type of plant, the time of year, the season (how much rain, sun, etc.), storage, type of milling, post-milling storage, etc., etc., etc. All of this affects not only the flavor of the flour but the *performance* of the flour in baked goods (this is one of the reasons that bakers love [King Arthur flours](#), because they are renowned for the consistency of their flours). King Arthur whole wheat and white wheat flours are available in many major supermarkets and most organic or whole food markets if you cannot find any local sources of flour (and are what I baked with before I found Wild Hive). I consistently find that Wild Hive flours will not absorb as much water as some of the highly-hydrated recipes call for; this may be due to the growing conditions in the Northeast, the type of grain that Wild Hive grows, or the freshness of the flour (milled a day or two before I receive it!). If you are using different flour, you may find you need to add more water than my recipes specify; pay close attention to the description of what the dough should look and feel like, and adjust your water/flour ratio accordingly. With a little practise, you will figure out the best ratio for your own flour source.
2. As mentioned, you could use all-purpose white flour, which is easier to work with, less sticky and faster to rise. But you might as well just

have a Coke and a vitamin and call it a day. Refined white flour is basically empty calories; [wine](#), [beer](#), [chocolate](#) and [coffee](#) are all better for you. So skip the pizza and just have wine & chocolate for dinner; or make this dough. Not a bad choice, actually.

Check [here for more pizza recipes](#), including how to top your delicious dough!

STORE

The dough can be punched down four times and refrigerated for up to 36 hours before the yeast is exhausted (if you need to make the dough prior to making the pizza). Dough can be frozen as well, double-wrapped in plastic wrap, for up to four months, although I find that it is more convenient, and results in better crust, to par-bake the crust and freeze that, for up to 3 months.

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