

Cooking Up Culture – Italian

Pizza Margherita (Makes 4 individual pizzas)

Pizza Dough:

- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- Pinch of sugar
- 1 cup warm water (approximately 100 degrees)
- 1 envelope dry active yeast
- 3 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil

Topping (for one pizza)

- 2 fresh tomatoes sliced
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 3–4 basil leaves torn or chopped

1. Make the pizza dough by combining the flour and salt in a large bowl. Make a large well in the middle of the flour and salt. Set aside.
2. In a small bowl, add the water and sprinkle in the yeast. Do not stir but let the yeast sit until it gets soft for 3-4 minutes. Stir and add the olive oil to combine.
3. Pour the water, yeast, and oil into the well in the large bowl with flour and salt. Using a rubber spatula, mix well to form a soft sticky dough.
4. Remove the dough from the bowl and place it onto a floured surface. Flour your hands well and knead the dough for approximate 5-7 minutes. The dough should become soft and smooth.
5. Form the dough into a ball and place it into a bowl that has been oiled with 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Move the dough around the inside of the bowl to coat it on all sides with the oil. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and place it in a warm place. Let the dough rise for one hour until it is doubled in size.
6. When the dough has risen, remove it from the bowl and place it on a floured surface. Divide the dough into two medium or four small balls (for smaller individual pizzas). Flatten the dough with your hands or rolling pin and try to keep the dough into a flat round shape.
7. Preheat the oven to 450 degrees.
8. In a pizza pan or baking sheet, use the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil to grease the pan. Sprinkle a light dusting of cornmeal on the bottom of the pan if you like – it is not necessary but it will provide extra help in keeping the pizza from sticking to the pan. Place the flatten dough down (you may need to reshape or flatten it) in the pan and use your fingers to press and stretch the dough out as much as you can.
9. Brush some extra virgin olive oil lightly on the top of the dough. Next, lay slices of fresh tomato on the top of the dough. Sprinkle the top with cheese, followed by the basil.
10. Bake in the oven 20-30 minutes...until the crust is golden brown (and not burned on the bottom – have someone life up a corner to check) and the cheese is bubbling.

Escarole with Fennel, Orange and Parmesan Cheese

Serves 4

Salad:

1 head of escarole or green leaf lettuce, cleaned, dried and chopped/torn into bite sized pieces

1 orange, peeled and segmented

1 bulb fennel, thinly sliced

1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, shaved

Dressing:

1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon plus one teaspoon balsamic vinegar

salt and pepper to taste

1. Pour the balsamic vinegar into a small bowl. Using a whisk, begin stirring the vinegar while slowly adding the olive oil. When they are mixed together, season with salt and pepper – make sure you add enough to make it taste good to you!

2. In a large bowl, place the escarole, fennel, and orange segments. Drizzle the dressing over the salad and toss to coat. Season the salad with salt and pepper to desired taste.

3. Place portions of the salad on individual salad plates. Top with shaved Parmesan cheese.

Tortoni

Serves 8-10

5 almond macaroon cookies

3/4 cup chocolate chips

1 cup heavy cream

1 teaspoon vanilla

1 quart of vanilla ice cream, softened

1. Place the macaroons in a zip locked bag. Close the bag and using a meat pounder, crush the cookies into small pieces. Place the crumbled cookies into a large bowl and add the chocolate chips. Toss to combine.

2. In another bowl, whip the cream until it is thick. Add the vanilla and continue whipping until the cream begins to form soft peaks.

3. Pour the whipped cream into the bowl with the cookie crumbs and chips and stir to combine.

4. Using a standing or hand mixer, whip the ice cream until it becomes soft. Pour the softened ice cream into the bowl with the cream, cookie crumbs and chips and mix carefully until they are combined.

5. Spoon the mixture into individual cups or muffin tins lined with paper cups. Place the cups into the freezer for at least an hour.

Chocolate Chip Biscotti

1 cup sugar
1/2 cup salted butter, softened
3 eggs
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla
2 3/4 cups flour
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
3/4 cup chocolate chips

1. In a bowl with a wooden spoon, mix the sugar and butter until they are well incorporated.
2. Add in the eggs and vanilla and beat well.
3. Add the flour and baking powder and blend until it is mixed together.
4. Add the chips and stir to combine.
5. Cover the dough with plastic wrap and chill in the fridge for one hour.
6. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.
7. Separate the dough into three equal balls. Put some flour on your hands and roll each ball out to form a small loaf of bread about 1/2 to 3/4 inch thick. Place each log onto a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
8. Bake in the oven for 20 minutes – remove and let them cool slightly. Cut each log into 1 inch slices and place each slice on a baking sheet. Bake for 7 minutes – remove them from the oven and flip the slices over onto the other side and bake for another 7 minutes. Enjoy!