

Cooking with the Club

by Chef Robert Larios



Send Us Your Recipes!

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Make It Margherita



DIRECTIONS:



Have all our tools and ingredients prepared on a clean cutting board and kitchen surface. Wash, pat-dry and dice the basil, then set aside.



Take flour and spread it over a clean cutting board. This helps keep the pizza dough from sticking to the surface as the dough is rolled out.



Begin kneading and flattening the dough so that it takes shape as a circle. Don't worry if it is not a perfect circle. I suggest a thin layer of dough so that the pizza becomes a thin-crust pizza.



Apply olive oil or nonstick cooking spray to the surface to a baking pan or pizza pan that has been wrapped in aluminum foil.



Place the dough on the baking pan. Add the pizza sauce over the dough and spread evenly.



Add the mozzarella cheese, basil and freshly cracked pepper over the sauce. Lastly, add a few drops of extra virgin olive oil.



Place in the oven and bake at 450 F degrees for about 20 minutes or until the crust is golden brown and the cheese has melted.



Cut a slice or two and serve.

As the story goes, around 1870, Chef Raffaele Esposito was ordered by Queen Margherita of Savoia, Italy (Margaret of Savoy) to bake a variety of pizzas. In honor of the Queen and the colors of the Italian flag, Raffaele made a pizza topped with tomatoes, mozzarella cheese and fresh basil. The queen loved the new pizza, and the word quickly got out about the pizza. It was named after her as well.

There are enough pizza varieties and ingredients used for them to fill a 1,000-page book. But for me, nothing is better than the simple creation of the pizza margherita. Simple yet extremely delicious, the flavor combination is perfection.

The amount of ingredients you use will depend on size and personal choice. One thing is for sure in the case of pizza -- more is likely going to be better here.

Pizza Serves 2 to 4

INGREDIENTS:

- Pizza dough (amount is your preference)
- Pizza sauce, 16 ounces
- Pepper, to taste
- Mozzarella cheese, 1 pound
- Basil, 1/2 cup
- Extra virgin olive oil, 2 table-
spoons (to prepare the pan and
to drizzle on pizza;
optional)
- Flour, 1/4 cup

Cooking Tidbit: Feel free to add as much or little of the main ingredients. Obviously, more dough means a larger pizza, with the need for more pizza sauce, cheese, basil and cooking time. You are free to make homemade dough and tomato sauce as well if you have the time, and believe me it is well worth the extra time.

[A Cook's Dictionary]

Pizza:

Made popular in the United States by soldiers who brought the idea back from Italy at the end of World War II, pizza is thought to have evolved from early Egyptian flat bread. Literally translated, the word means "pie," but it has come to represent a round savory tart made with a crisp yeast dough covered with tomato sauce, mozzarella cheese and other ingredients such as peppers, onions, Italian sausage, mushrooms, anchovies and pepperoni. Variations such as deep-dish pizza, with its bread-like crust, have been popular over the years. Many menus now feature pizzas with just tomato sauce and mozzarella cheese. They're topped instead with ingredients such as sun-dried tomatoes, duck sausage, fresh basil, smoked salmon, goat cheese or wild mushrooms.

- From the *The New Food Lover's Companion*, Sharon Tyler Herbst, 1995, Barron's Educational Series.

