

Pizza Bianca di Forno campo de' Fiori

Because the price of bread is traditionally low in Italy, bakers are always trying to find ways to sell flour and water for more money. Pizza bianca is probably three times the price per kilo as bread. Maybe this is one of the reasons it has become a classic Roman street food. One of my favorite pizza places is Forno Campo de' Fiori, where I enjoy a slice while strolling through the piazza on market days, taking in the colorful sight of fruit and vegetable stalls.

Bernardino Bartocci and his cousin Fabio kindly let me spend a few days baking pizza with their team. Every morning and evening, they mix a bubbly, super-soft, nearly pourable dough and ferment it in 2-kilo pieces in large tubs, very slowly at room temperature for 6 hours or more. They then divide the dough into 2-kilo pieces and shape the pieces into large ovals. The ovals are refrigerated for 2 to 10 hours, to relax. After the dough has warmed to room temperature, it is gently pulled and pressed, dimpled, and pulled and pressed again, until it is stretched to 8 feet in length. Topped with a little olive oil and sea salt, crushed tomatoes, or seasonal specialties like shaved artichokes or zucchini blossoms, it is loaded into the oven on an extra-long peel and baked. The hot baked pizzas may be sprinkled with herbs. Every 15 minutes a fresh pizza is pulled from the oven. Customers order the pizza by length, and it is sliced, weighed, wrapped in paper, handed over, and most likely eaten while walking out the door.

Making this style of pizza at home is easy—instead of stretching the dough to 8 feet, you only have to get it to cover the baking stone. It does require many minutes of kneading, a long fermentation, and your confidence that a dough this soft will become extremely elastic and transform in the oven into delicious, bubbly pizza. Ice water keeps the dough cool and ensures slow fermentation.

Start to Finish: 21 to 28 hours

knead: 22 minutes

first fermentation: 1 hour

Retard: 18 to 24 hours

warm up: 1 hour

Rest: 30 minutes

Bake: 15 to 20 minutes per pizza

Makes: two 490-gram flatbread pizzas

INGREDIENTS	BAKER'S %	METRIC WEIGHT
FINAL DOUGH		

Tip 00 flour with W value of 250 to 260	100	500 g
Ice water	85	425 g
Salt	2.2	11 g
Dry instant yeast	0.2	1 g
Olive oil	5	25 g
Flaky sea salt	1	5 g
Fresh rosemary or thyme, chopped	3	15 g

- 1. Make the final dough:** Combine the flour, 375 g of the ice water, the salt, and yeast in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a dough hook. Stir with a rubber spatula just until a rough dough forms. With the dough hook, mix on low (2 on a KitchenAid mixer) for 4 minutes. Turn the mixer to medium-high (8 on a KitchenAid mixer) and continue to mix, very slowly drizzling in the remaining 50 g water over the course of another 12 minutes. The dough will be very loose, almost liquid. Continue mixing for 3 to 4 minutes, until the dough comes together. Turn the mixer to the highest speed and mix until the dough pulls away from the sides of the bowl, another 2 to 4 minutes.
- 2. First fermentation:** Transfer the dough to a lightly oiled, clear 4-quart container with a lid. Cover and let stand at room temperature for 2 hours.
- 3. Retard:** Refrigerate the dough for 18 to 24 hours.
- 4. Warm up:** Remove the dough from the refrigerator and let sit on the counter to warm up, about 1 hour.
- 5. About 1 hour before baking,** place a baking stone on the middle rack of the oven. Preheat the oven to 500 degrees. Pour the dough onto a lightly floured countertop and gently press into a rectangle measuring 12 by 20 inches. Use a bench scraper or sharp chef's knife to cut the dough into two rectangles measuring 6 by 20 inches. Lightly drape with plastic wrap. Let rest 30 minutes.
- 6. Bake:** Line two baker's peels or rimless baking sheets with parchment. Dust with flour. Transfer the rectangles to the peels or baking sheets and dimple the dough all over with your fingertips. Lift two corners of a rectangle from the peel, stretching it as you lift, and place it back down on the peel several times to stretch the dough to 12 by 18 inches. Gently dimple the dough again. Brush with olive oil and sprinkle with sea salt to taste and rosemary. Repeat with the remaining dough rectangle. Slide one pizza, still on the parchment, onto the baking stone. Bake until the pizza is bubbled and golden brown, 15 to 20 minutes. Slide the pizza, still on the parchment, onto a cutting board. Repeat with the remaining pizza. Slice and serve immediately.

Note for Professional Bakers

To increase dough extensibility and facilitate the stretching of the dough, an autolyse could be used during the mixing process. Alternatively, to decrease the elastic resistance of the dough, you could add 0.1 to 0.2 percent deactivated yeast to the formula.

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