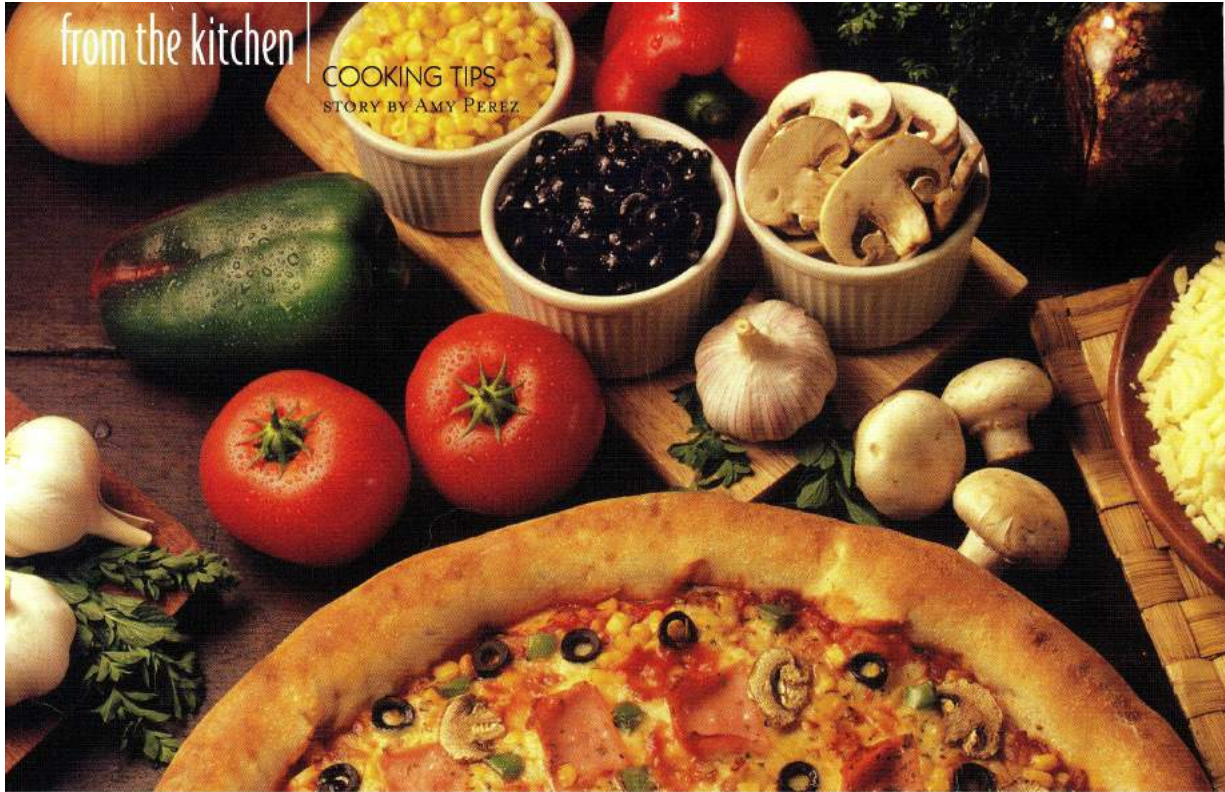


from the kitchen

COOKING TIPS
STORY BY AMY PEREZ



Fresh summer vegetables are the perfect topping for your homemade pizza.

Gourmet Pizza Pies

MAKE-IT-YOURSELF TIPS FROM THE PIZZA EXPERTS

PIZZA MAKING HAS EVOLVED FROM YOUR BASIC PEPPERONI AND CHEESE to delicious artisan gourmet pizzas. Served piping hot at your favorite eatery, pizza is hard to beat, but not as hard as you may think. Why not make your own gourmet pizza at home? It is great fun and easy to do. Pizza Mondo and Pizzicato in Bend, Veraci Pizza (a traveling pizza kitchen) and Pisano's Pizza in Prineville and Bend have offered helpful tips for making delicious pizza pies.

To make a great pizza at home, the most important factors are fresh and quality ingredients, a pizza stone, high oven temperatures, excellent pizza dough and to have fun! The summer heat may be prohibitive for indoor oven cooking, so grilling pizza on an outdoor barbecue is a fabulous alternative.

The basis of a good pie is excellent crust. Great pizza dough is made from high-gluten flour, good salt, yeast and warm water. John Picarazzi of Pizza Mondo also recommends adding a bit of turbinado sugar to slightly sweeten the crust. The texture should be soft and fleshy, not too moist, and should rest (proof) at least one to 24 hours. Pizza dough can also be purchased directly from a pizzeria or gourmet food store.

Since most home kitchens lack high-temperature

ovens, you can transform your conventional oven into a pizza oven by baking directly on a pizza stone, which absorbs and distributes heat evenly. Preheat the oven and stone on high for half an hour.

Now you are ready to make pizza! Remove the warm stone and dust it with white or corn flour (for a touch of sweetness), then roll out the room-temperature dough to a 1/4-inch thickness (Neapolitan style), working quickly to avoid sticking. Don't worry if your pizza looks like it was formed by your 10-year-old, as that is all part of the charm. Whether you use a fresh red, white or pesto sauce, it should just be a background for the toppings and not too overpowering.

Cameron Jett from Veraci Pizza stands by his recipe for a great white sauce: poach a whole finely chopped garlic clove in 1/4 inch of olive oil and simmer for 20 minutes. When it comes to toppings, less is more. One reason is that the thin crust gets soggy quickly. Besides, summer weather is more appropriate for lighter, fresher fare such as thinly cut fresh, seasonal vegetables (raw or roasted), kalamata olives, capers, *prosciutto*, shrimp and the like.

Top with a blend of high-quality cheese: mozzarella, Asiago, *Pecorino Romano* and Parmesan. "A key trick," says Ed Barbeau of Pisano's Pizza, "is to always

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Excellent crust is the basis of a great pizza.

"A key trick is to always grate the cheese from a fresh block to capture the full flavor."

— Ed Barbeau
Pisano's Pizza

grate the cheese from a fresh block to capture the full flavor." Feta, Gouda, jack and goat cheeses are all superb for flavor variety. For the final touch, toss on finely chopped fresh herbs and cook for five to seven minutes.

Grilling pizza on a barbecue takes pizza making to a whole new level. Divide your charcoal grill with bricks and only stack lump hardwood charcoal on one side — essentially creating a hot zone and a cool zone. When the coals are bright red, roll out the pizza and place it on the hot zone and cook for three minutes. The bottom should be nicely charred and blistered. Flip the pizza over and place onto the cooler zone. Brush the cooked side with olive oil or your desired sauce, add the toppings, then cover the grill and let the ambient heat finish cooking the pizza. The entire process takes about seven to 10 minutes. A charcoal grill is preferred over a gas grill because it burns hotter and provides more flavor possibilities. However, if you are using a gas grill with two burners, preheat one burner on high, leaving the other unlit. For a single-burner gas grill, preheat on high, and lower the flame to cook the second side of the pizza.

Greg Simmons of Pizzicato says, "The goal is to have a concert of flavors, which is accomplished by not overpowering the taste buds. Make a slice or bite that really incorporates all the flavors and ingredients without overdoing it." Now that you know the tricks of the pizza trade, you, too, can make fabulous pizza at home. Dinner guests will be awestruck by your creations. Mangia tutti! 

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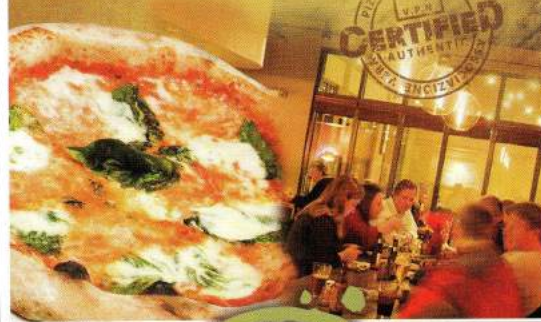
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