How to Make Neapolitan Pizza Cavan Style at Home

Understanding the Neapolitan pizza tradition

Neapolitan pizza is not just a meal; it is a craft with roots that go deep into the city of Naples. The dough, the sauce, the cheese, and the fire all work together to create something simple and extraordinary. Making one at home takes attention, practice, and the right techniques. This article walks through the steps, from mixing the flour to pulling a blistered, chewy pie from your oven.

Step 1: Choose your flour and start the fermentation

The foundation of any Neapolitan pizza is the dough. For a classic Neapolitan crust you want a flour with high protein content, typically around 12-13%. Tipo 00 flour is the traditional choice, but strong bread flour also works. The key is a long, cold fermentation. A 72-hour fermentation develops flavour and makes the dough easier to stretch without tearing. Mix the flour with water, a small amount of fresh yeast or sourdough starter, and salt. Knead until smooth, then let it rest in the fridge for three days. During that time the yeast and bacteria break down the starches, creating a complex, slightly tangy taste. Watch for the dough to double in size and feel airy when pressed. If it smells overly sour, the fermentation has gone too far; next time use less starter or shorter time.

Step 2: Prepare the sauce with San Marzano tomatoes

The sauce for a true Neapolitan pizza is uncooked. San Marzano tomatoes, grown in the volcanic soil near Mount Vesuvius, are the gold standard. They are sweet, low in acidity, and have a firm flesh that breaks down easily. Crush them by hand or pass them through a food mill. Add a pinch of salt and a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil. Do not cook the sauce; it will cook on the pizza in the oven. Some people add fresh basil or oregano, but the classic is just tomatoes, salt, and oil. Watch for tomatoes that are too watery. If the sauce is runny, drain off some liquid before using. A wet sauce makes the dough soggy and prevents a crisp bottom.

Step 3: Use fresh mozzarella and other toppings

Fresh mozzarella is essential. The low-moisture, shredded kind will not give the same creamy melt. Slice or tear the mozzarella into small pieces and let it drain on paper towels for at least 30 minutes. Excess moisture turns the pizza into a puddle. For a classic margherita, use fresh mozzarella, San Marzano sauce, and basil. If you want a vegan option, look for a vegan cheese that melts and browns well; many are based on cashews or coconut oil. Watch for toppings

that release water, such as fresh mushrooms or raw peppers. If you add them, pat them dry first. Too much moisture will steam the pizza instead of baking it.

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Step 4: Shape the dough by hand

Neapolitan pizza is shaped by hand, never rolled with a pin. Take a ball of dough out of the fridge and let it come to room temperature for about 30 minutes. Dust your work surface with flour. Press the dough flat with your fingertips, then pick it up and stretch it gently over your knuckles, rotating as you go. The centre should be thin, but the edge should remain thick for the cornicione, the puffy crust. Watch for tearing. If the dough rips easily, it may be too cold or not relaxed enough. Let it rest another 10 minutes. If it springs back when you try to stretch it, it is not relaxed; cover it and wait. The finished base should be about 10-12 inches across, with a slightly thicker rim.

Step 5: Heat your oven as hot as possible

Neapolitan pizza bakes fast at very high temperatures. A wood-fired oven reaches 800-900°F, cooking a pizza in 60-90 seconds. At home, a pizza steel or stone in a conventional oven set to its maximum temperature (usually 500-550°F) will work, but the result will be different. Place the steel or stone on the top rack and preheat for at least 45 minutes. Some ovens have a broiler setting that can boost the top heat. If you have a gas oven, watch the flame: a steady, even heat is best. An electric oven may cycle on and off; try to launch the pizza when the element is glowing. For an outdoor setup, a portable pizza oven that burns wood or gas can reach the needed heat. Whatever you use, the goal is a very hot surface that will char the bottom and puff the crust.

Luso Restaurant Cavan Food is also on Instagram.

Step 6: Assemble and launch the pizza

Work quickly once the dough is stretched. Spread a thin layer of sauce, leaving a border for the crust. Add the mozzarella pieces and any other toppings. Do not overload; Neapolitan pizza has a thin, wet centre that needs to cook through. Slide the pizza onto a floured peel or a sheet of parchment paper. Shake the peel gently to make sure the pizza moves freely. Open the oven and launch the pizza onto the hot steel or stone with a quick forward-and-back motion. Watch for sticking. If the pizza sticks, lift it with a spatula and slide a bit of flour underneath. Close the oven door immediately to keep the heat in.

Step 7: Bake and check for doneness

Bake for 2-4 minutes in a home oven, longer if the heat is lower. The crust should be golden brown with dark spots, the cheese bubbly and melted, and the sauce cooked through. For a wood-fired or high-heat oven, the pizza is done when the cornicione is puffed and charred in spots. Watch for burning. If the top is browning too fast before the bottom is set, lower the rack or reduce the temperature slightly. If the bottom is burning before the top is done, you need more heat from above or a lower stone temperature. Let the pizza rest for a minute before slicing. A hot pizza straight from the oven will be soft; it firms up as it cools slightly.

Step 8: What to look for in a Neapolitan pizza Cavan

When you are out and want to judge a Neapolitan pizza, look for a thin, soft centre that folds easily, a puffy, charred crust, and simple, high-quality ingredients. The sauce should taste like tomatoes, not like a cooked paste. The cheese should be creamy and distributed in small pools, not a solid blanket. The bottom should be leopard-spotted with dark marks from the hot stone, not pale or burnt. If you are in Cavan and looking for Neapolitan pizza behind the Black Horse Inn, you will find a place that follows these same principles: 72-hour fermented sourdough, San Marzano tomatoes, fresh mozzarella, and a very hot oven. That combination produces the classic Neapolitan experience. The same attention to dough and heat that you practice at home is what makes a great pizzeria stand out. So when you taste a Neapolitan pizza behind the Black Horse Inn, you can appreciate the work that went into the crust, the sauce, and the bake.

Step 9: Adapt for your equipment

Not everyone has a pizza oven. A cast-iron skillet or a baking sheet turned upside down can serve as a decent substitute. Preheat the skillet in the oven for 30 minutes before launching the pizza. The key is thermal mass: the more heat the surface holds, the better the bottom will cook. If you use parchment paper, trim it close to the pizza edge to avoid burning paper in the oven. For an outdoor grill, set it up for indirect heat and place a pizza stone on the grate. Close the lid to trap heat. Watch for uneven cooking: rotate the pizza halfway through if one side is browning faster. Every oven and grill behaves differently, so it helps to bake a test pizza first to learn your setup.

Step 10: Troubleshooting common problems

If the crust is pale and soft, the oven was not hot enough or the dough was too thick. Next time, increase the preheat time or use a higher-protein flour. If the centre is soggy, you used too much sauce or wet mozzarella. Drain the cheese and reduce the sauce. If the pizza sticks to the peel, you waited too long after topping it, or the dough was too wet. Use a generous dusting of semolina or flour on the peel and work quickly. If the crust burns but the centre is

undercooked, the heat is too high from above or the stone is too hot. Lower the rack or reduce the oven temperature slightly. With practice, you will learn to read the dough and the heat, and each pizza will improve.

For those who want to taste a well-made Neapolitan pizza without the work, Luso Restaurant Cavan Food is located behind the Black Horse Inn, 9B Church St, Abbeyland, Cavan, H12 C8P7, Ireland, and can be reached at +353 87 453 8260.