

HOT 2 GO



Brick oven pizza from scratch? In a home oven? Pipe dream? Long the province of a traditional wood-fired pizza oven, the authentic 'thin crust' with a chewy bottom bark can now be attained at home with a few simple hacks.

The concept is this: partially bake the crust on a standard 16" aluminum pizza pan to 'skin' the bottom, remove from the oven and add the toppings, return to the oven briefly, then slide onto the open rack to let the heat reach the bottom side. Even with the traditional household of ovens, upper limit of 500°, a thin crusty pizza is now possible. Yes, this breaks all the rules. Pizza Purists would say this is nothing more than preparing a flatbread decorating it and finishing it in the oven. But the results are as close to a brick oven pizza as you can imagine.

Yes, you can roll out your dough, add your toppings and attempt to slide it off your official Williams and Sonoma pizza peel onto the rack of the oven. At this point, the whole pie is about as firm as a wet towel, and jerking your doughy pie off the peel is like trying to land an F-16 on a pickleball court. More likely, it will crumple off the peel on its way to the back wall of the oven, where it pastes against the hot metal, explodes into a volcanic sizzle, drips down to the bottom of the oven box, sets off your smoke detectors, and leaves you with a cleanup nightmare unsurpassed. And a can of soup for dinner. Do this instead:

- Set a rack in the upper half of the oven. Keep it preheated at 500° for at least ½ an hour, longer is even better. Slide the pan with undecorated dough onto the rack, and let it bake for at least 5 minutes to 'skin'.
- Now, pay attention during all of this: without the weight of the toppings on the firstly rolled out dough, soon after it hits the hot oven, you'll watch in horror as softball sized eruptions blow your dough up to the size of a lumpy beach ball. Keep a long knife handy and just reach in and poke a hole in these. You can flatten them down then with the flat side of the knife. No harm, no foul.
- Look for your 'skinning' dough to show tan splotches on the top, the sign that it's properly skinned underneath. Take it out to add your toppings, though first slide the peel between the dough and pan to loosen the dough, ensuring a successful separation in the next step:
- Back into the oven for about 5 minutes. Then, reach into the oven with the peel, and slide between the pan and pie. With your other hand, pull the pan out, and tip the peel onto the rack to slide the pizza off. Continue to cook the pizza until bubbling-hot, remove and let cool. Yum.



Skin the dough



Loosen, add toppings



Bake



'Mangiare!'

