

# CAST-IRON SKILLET

MAKES ONE 12-INCH ROUND SKILLET PIZZA; 6 LARGE SLICES

Several years ago, my World Pizza Champions team got invited to do a pizza-throwing show at Wrigley Field—a major-league honor in a town that takes its pizza so seriously. It was a rainy afternoon, but we had fun anyway, and so did the crowd. That night, Jeff Stolfe, the founder of Connie's Pizza, invited me to his flagship restaurant for dinner, and that was when I first tasted Connie's signature cast-iron skillet pies. Later, I tried the city's other famous skillet pizza at Pequod's, and this version, which we serve at Capo's, is my hybrid of those two styles.

It's like a cross between a Chicago deep-dish and a Sicilian with a touch of Detroit: Chicago because it uses my deep-dish dough. Sicilian because you push the dough out in the pan (rather than rolling it), let it rise, and then bake it partway before you add any cheese or toppings, so you get a completely different texture—much lighter and puffier than deep-dish—from the same dough. And Detroit because I add a rim of crispy almost burnt cheese around the edge, Detroit-style (see page 63).

One of the nice things about this pizza is that once you parbake the crust, you can let it sit out at room temperature for up to 3 hours before you top it and finish baking. That's the technique we use at the restaurant, and it makes this pie a great choice for entertaining because you're halfway done before the guests arrive.

If you want to serve a vegetarian version, you can substitute vegetable shortening for the lard in the pan and in the dough (see Note on Making Vegetarian Deep-Dish Dough, page 75), eliminate the sausage, and add more peppers or other sautéed vegetables, like spinach, chard, kale, eggplant, or mushrooms.

In 2014, our chef at Capo's, Matt Molina, entered the International Pizza Challenge at the Pizza Expo in Las Vegas with a cast-iron skillet pizza similar to this one—The Dillinger, made with a burnt sharp-cheddar crust and a four-cheese Hangar One Vodka Smoked Alfredo sauce, topped with chicken, artichoke hearts, red onion, roasted peppers, bacon and broccolini. He not only won the American Pan division, but also went on to win World Champion Pizza Maker of the Year.

continued

## Cast-Iron Skillet, continued

1 (22-ounce/625-gram) ball Chicago Deep-Dish Dough (page 74)

Medium-grind cornmeal, for dusting

2 teaspoons (9 grams) lard or vegetable shortening, at room temperature

2 tablespoons (28 grams) extra virgin olive oil

1 ounce (30 grams) provolone cheese, sliced (1 slice)

4 ounces (115 grams) Sweet Fennel Sausage (page 54; optional)

1 teaspoon finely chopped garlic

6 ounces (170 grams) part-skim mozzarella cheese, shredded (1½ cups)

3 ounces (85 grams) white Cheddar, preferably Cabot, shredded (scant 1 cup)

2 ounces (55 grams/¼ cup) whole-milk ricotta cheese, preferably New York-style Polly-O or Ricotta Cream, page 91, at room temperature

⅓ cup (55 grams) Sautéed Red Peppers (page 90)

½ cup (115 grams) Deep-Dish Tomato Sauce (page 77), warm

Grated Pecorino Romano cheese, for dusting

Dried oregano, for dusting

Red pepper flakes, for dusting (optional)

Garlic Oil (page 29), for drizzling

Remove the dough ball from the refrigerator and leave wrapped at room temperature until the dough warms to 50°F to 55°F. This should take about 1 hour.

Smear the lard on the bottom and sides of a 12-inch cast-iron skillet (measure the skillet from side to side of the top edge). Spread the olive oil over the lard.

Dust the work surface with a generous amount of cornmeal, then transfer the dough to the surface (see Transferring the Dough to the Work surface, page 30). Coat both sides of the dough with cornmeal, and put the dough in the prepared pan. Using the fingertips of both hands, push the dough outward from the center to fill the bottom of the pan evenly. Set the uncovered pan in a warm spot for 1 to 1½ hours, until the dough has risen slightly.

Meanwhile, set up the oven with two pizza stones or baking steels and preheat to 500°F for 1 hour (see Getting Started, page 29).

Place the skillet on the bottom stone and bake for 10 minutes until golden brown.

Remove from the oven (the baked dough can rest in the pan for up to 3 hours, but remember to preheat the oven for 1 hour before continuing).

Tear the provolone into 8 pieces and arrange them on the pizza, leaving a ½-inch border. Pinch nickel-size pieces of the sausage and distribute them evenly over the cheese. Scatter the garlic over the top, and then sprinkle the mozzarella evenly over the sausage. Stack the Cheddar around the edge of the dough; you want it to rise slightly up the sides of the pan.

Place the skillet on the top stone for 7 to 10 minutes, until the top is golden brown.

Meanwhile, put the ricotta in a pastry bag with a ¼-inch opening or plain tip.

Remove the skillet from the oven and quickly scatter the red peppers over the pizza. Place the skillet on the bottom stone and bake for 3 to 6 minutes, until the cheese around the edge of the pan is charred.

Remove from the oven and run a long metal spatula around the inside of the pan to loosen the pizza from the pan. Then, using the spatula, and being careful not to pierce the bottom of the crust, lift the pizza from the pan and transfer it to a cutting board.

Using a rocking cutter or a serrated knife, cut the pizza into 6 large wedges, leaving them in place. Spoon dollops of the tomato sauce around the pizza, then pipe quarter-size dollops of ricotta on each slice. Finish with a light dusting of pecorino, oregano, and pepper flakes and a drizzle of garlic oil.



# DEEP-DISH TOMATO SAUCE

MAKES 2¼ CUPS (510 GRAMS)

It's best to make this uncooked sauce when you make your dough and then refrigerate it overnight so the flavors can come together.

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**6 ounces (170 grams/2/3 cup) tomato paste, preferably Saporito Super Heavy Pizza Sauce**

**3 ounces (85 grams/1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons) ground tomatoes, preferably 7/11 or DiNapoli**

**¾ teaspoon (.5 grams) dried oregano**

**Pinch of fine sea salt**

**½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) extra virgin olive oil**

**9 ounces (255 grams/1⅓ cups) hand-crushed tomatoes (see page 28)**

Combine the tomato paste, ground tomatoes, oregano, salt, and oil in a deep bowl or other deep container and puree with an immersion blender. Stir in the crushed tomatoes.

The sauce can be covered and refrigerated for up to 3 days before using.

# CHICAGO DEEP-DISH DOUGH

MAKES 27 OUNCES (770 GRAMS), ENOUGH FOR 1 DEEP-DISH PIZZA

I make all of my Chicago doughs with Ceresota flour, an unbleached, unbromated all-purpose flour made from hard red winter wheat. (It is branded Ceresota in Illinois and elsewhere but is sold under the brand name Heckers in the Northeast; see Sources, page 304). It's a relatively low-gluten flour in the 12 percent range that is the traditional choice of Chicago pizzerias. It's also the flour I specify when training and certifying *pizzaiolos* in Chicago pizza at my school. If you can't find it, substitute another good-quality unbleached all-purpose flour for Chicago doughs.

Some Chicago pizzas use cooked potato or semolina in the dough and no cornmeal, but my flour-and-cornmeal dough is my favorite way to go. It's made without a starter, and, unlike most pizza doughs, its flavor and texture come more from fat than from yeast, making it a bit like a cross between a pizza dough and a pie crust. I've found that equal parts butter and lard make for the best flavor and texture. Note that this dough needs to proof for at least 24 hours; it will be even better if left for up to 48 hours.

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**4.5 grams (1½ teaspoons) active dry yeast**

**70 grams (¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon) warm water (80°F to 85°F)**

**430 grams (3½ cups) all-purpose flour with 12 percent protein, preferably Ceresota**

**23 grams (2½ tablespoons) medium-grind cornmeal**

**9 grams (1 tablespoon) diastatic malt**

Put the yeast in a small bowl, add the warm water, and whisk vigorously for 30 seconds. The yeast should dissolve in the water and the mixture should foam. If it doesn't and the yeast granules float, the yeast is "dead" and the mixture should be discarded. Begin again with a fresh amount of yeast and water.

Combine the flour, cornmeal, and malt in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook. With the mixer running on the lowest speed, add the lard and butter and mix for 1 minute.

Pour in most of the ice water, reserving about 2 tablespoons, followed by the yeast-water mixture. Pour the reserved water into the yeast bowl, swirl it around to dislodge any bits of yeast stuck to the bowl, and add to the mixer.

18 grams (1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon) lard, cut into small pieces, at room temperature

18 grams (1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon) European-style unsalted butter, preferably 82 percent butterfat, cut into small pieces, at room temperature

202 grams ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup plus 2 tablespoon) ice water, plus more as needed

9 grams (2 teaspoons) fine sea salt

*For baker's percentages, see page 302.*

Continue to mix the dough at the lowest speed for about 1 minute, until most of the dough comes together around the hook. Stop the mixer. Use your fingers to pull away any dough that clings to the hook, and scrape the sides and bottom of the bowl with a bowl scraper or rubber spatula.

Add the salt and mix on the lowest speed for 1 minute to combine.

Check the bottom of the bowl for any unincorporated flour. Turn the dough over and press it into the bottom of the bowl to pick up any stray pieces.

Stop the mixer, pull the dough off the hook, and scrape down the sides and bottom of the bowl. If there is still unincorporated flour at the bottom of the bowl, sprinkle with a very small amount of water and mix for 1 minute.

Use a bowl scraper to transfer the dough to an unfloured work surface, then knead it for 2 to 3 minutes, until smooth (see Kneading the Dough, page 24). Cover the dough with a damp dish towel and let it rest at room temperature for 1 hour.

Use a dough cutter to loosen the dough and move it to the scale. You will need 27 ounces (770 grams) of dough. You may have a little extra dough. Form the dough into a ball (see Balling the Dough, page 26) and set it on a half sheet pan. Wrap the pan airtight with a double layer of plastic wrap, sealing the wrap well under the pan. Put the pan in a level spot in the refrigerator and refrigerate for 24 to 48 hours.

*Note on Making Vegetarian Deep-Dish Dough: You can substitute 18 grams vegetable shortening for the lard.*