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with uncle chris

A BRIGHTON COUNCIL
COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

AUTUMN 2011 EDITION



pizza PERFECTION

Hello folks. This is Uncle Chris writing to you again! I have to confess I have my own pizza oven at home. It's out the back. Built it myself because I love pizzas and making your own is the way to go – it's cheaper than buying takeaways and is healthier for you.

Before I built my own pizza oven I could create pizzas to perfection in my kitchen. So can you.

It's easy if you follow the basic rules. And you can be really creative – the topping is up to your imagination.

A tomato base is the usual fare, but not always. Inside this mailout, I'll give you a delicious pizza recipe with not a hint of tomato in the topping.

We all know Italians invented the pizza a few centuries ago. But did they really? The Greeks, Egyptians and Arabs in the Middle East may lay claim to the recipe – they invented pita bread, a close relative of pizza.

It doesn't really matter who invented the pizza. The base has to be thin and crispy, and what goes on it is equally important.

Americans love their pizzas smothered in pepperoni. Japanese prefer squid (calamari), while the Russians love it with onions and seafoods. Down in Brazil they use green peas and in India they combine pickled ginger, minced mutton and tofu.

Just let your imagination take hold and you'll be amazed at your own creativity with pizza making.

You can add fresh vegetables ... zucchini, capsicum, eggplant, tomatoes, mushrooms, leeks. For spicing up, add some olives, capers, sun-dried tomatoes, anchovies, sardines, tuna, fresh and smoked salmon.

Make some pizzas with fruits and nuts, including pinenuts and walnuts.

When it comes to pizza making almost anything goes, as long as you like what you put on top.

Turn the page and I'll show you how to make your own. Have fun!



THE SPICES of life

Spices ... ahh, what would life be without them!

Every cook's Number 1 spice, the King of Spice, is pepper – black, white or green. Black pepper is stronger than white – it's best to grind whole peppercorns of these two varieties for fuller flavour, rather than using the ready-ground powders. Green peppercorns have a milder taste; they are usually kept in a preserving liquid in the fridge and are used in sauces for fish and chicken recipes.

Unlike most herbs, which are grown in cooler climates, such as that of Tasmania, peppercorns and other spices come from the hotter climates of India, South-East Asia and the West Indies.

As well as being an essential ingredient of cooking, some spices, including cinnamon and turmeric, are said to have medicinal uses; others, like star anise, can freshen the breath. And at night there is nothing like a sprinkle of freshly ground nutmeg on hot milk to send you off to dreamland.

Check out my favourite spices on your fridge magnet inside.

WHAT'S COOKING
Granny Smith?
see inside . . .



You could be ... **OUR MASTER PIZZA CHEF!** Four great prizes to be won. See inside for details.

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PIZZAS made easy

Basically pizza is a flat bread baked with a variety of toppings. Don't overload your pizzas – otherwise you're cooking a vegetable and cheese pie. Pizzas should be thin and crispy. Here are the key components:

THE base

(this will make two pizzas, each 30 cm in diameter)

500 g plain flour
20 g dry yeast
1 ½ teaspoons salt
300-375 ml lukewarm water
1-2 tablespoons olive oil

Thoroughly mix the dry ingredients in a bowl, then slowly add the water and oil to make the dough. You may not need all the water – 300 ml may be enough, or the dough may take slightly more than 350 ml. It depends on the dryness of the flour.

The dough needs to be firm, elastic and not sticking to your hands. It's a good idea to smear a little olive oil on your hands, as well as on the inside of the bowl and the baking tray.

Shape the dough into a ball. If you want to make only one pizza now, split the dough into two and freeze one portion, tightly wrapped in a plastic bag. [It keeps for one month, and when you want to use it let it thaw until it is at room temperature].

Place the dough you need now for the pizza in a bowl with plastic wrap and rest at room temperature for 30 minutes to an hour (length of time depends on the room temperature). When the ball of dough doubles in volume you'll know it's ready for the next stage!

If you are making two pizzas immediately and haven't frozen half the dough, divide the dough into two – each portion will make a pizza base 30 cm in diameter.

The professional pizza makers make their thin base this way: They roll the dough into a thick disc, then they stretch the dough by twirling it on upraised fists and throwing it occasionally into the air to turn it.

If you want to avoid the risk of the dough landing on your head, there is a safer way to make the base ...

Roll out the dough – you can use your fists to help flatten it. Shape the dough round or square, according to the baking tray you will use. Roll it until it is thin, which will make a nice crispy crust when baked.

Let the dough rest for a little while, in the meantime start preparing your topping. When the base rises again on the tray, just flatten it with the palm of your hand. Once you start putting on the topping, the base will keep still.

Next we have to make the pizzaiola, the savoury tomato paste for a good pizza.

Make quite a lot and keep refrigerated for further use.

There are two kinds of tomato bases that you can make – a cooked one and an uncooked spicy one.

COOKED pizzaiola

1 onion
2 cloves garlic
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1 can chopped tomatoes
1 bay leaf
½ teaspoon oregano
salt and black pepper

Chop onion and garlic and fry in olive oil.

Add tomato paste and heat, but do not burn it. Add can of chopped tomatoes and herbs, stir and cook for about 20 minutes on low heat. Remove bay leaf. Can keep in the fridge for up to two days or freezer for up to six months.

UNCOOKED salsa

This tomato base is best made when fresh tomatoes are in season.

1 onion
2 cloves garlic
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon tomato paste
600 g fresh ripe tomatoes, cut into small



cubes and deseeded
¼ teaspoon chilli powder
½ teaspoon salt

Mix olive oil and tomato paste in a bowl. Add fresh tomatoes, onion finely chopped, garlic pressed, chilli powder and salt. Mix well.

Spread pizzaiola or salsa evenly on the pizza base.

TOPPINGS

Now you can become creative with your toppings.

Use fresh vegetables – especially mushrooms, red onions and capsicum. You can add slices of sausage, bacon, ham ... it's up to you. Fresh herbs, especially oregano, thyme and marjoram, go well of course. But if using basil add it only when the pizza is out of the oven. Olives, anchovies and a touch of chilli can give pizzas that extra zing!

If using seafood – such as calamari, scallops or salmon – add it just a few minutes before the pizza is cooked.

Mozzarella is an essential ingredient of most pizzas. Another great cheese on pizzas is parmesan. To avoid a greasy pizza, don't overload it with cheese. Remember, less is better. When spreading the topping, leave an edge of 1 ½ cm free.

The pizza should be cooked on a flat baking tray in the bottom of your oven at 240C. You can smear the tray with a little olive oil – but not too much! Remember, you are aiming at making a



crispy pizza. Cooking time varies, but is usually around 15 minutes.

For a healthy and good-looking meal, I reckon pizza should be served with a fresh green salad. Keep it simple. Some cherry tomatoes chopped up on the leaves and a glug of good olive oil and perhaps a dash of fresh lemon juice or balsamic vinegar. Oh, and some freshly ground black pepper of course!

WHY not try these?

Here are some simply great pizzas for you to make.

The pizza base should be rolled out to about 30 cm in diameter. Then on goes the pizzaiola, and the topping of your choice goes on top of that.

Bake on a baking tray on the bottom shelf of your oven for 15 minutes at 240C. Take out when crispy.

Pizza Margherita

1 portion of pizzaiola
100 g grated mozzarella, sprinkle a pinch of pepper. Bake on the bottom shelf for 15 minutes at 240C. Garnish with basil leaves. Enjoy!

Pizza Napoli

1 portion of pizzaiola
80 g grated mozzarella
1 small can or jar of anchovies
1 teaspoon capers
2 tablespoons parmesan sprinkled over the lot.
Bake as above.

Pizza Funghi

1 portion of pizzaiola
80 g grated mozzarella
100 g button mushrooms, sliced and spread over the pizza
Bake as above.

Pizza Rossa Calamari

1 portion of pizzaiola

Bake pizza with only the pizzaiola on top for 12 minutes bottom shelf at 240C.

In the meantime take:

1 tablespoon olive oil
½ tablespoon lemon juice
1 clove garlic, crushed
1 pinch salt and pepper
150 g calamari

Mix all the ingredients then put them on the pre-baked pizza and bake for another 2-3 minutes.

Sprinkle some parsley or coriander (optional) and enjoy!

Pizza Rossa Diavolo

(Devil's Pizza, because it's hot!)

1 portion uncooked salsa.

Bake on bottom shelf for 8 minutes at 240C. Add about 10 slices of hot salami and bake for another 2 minutes or until crisp.

HEY mum, no tomato!

Pizza with Pears and Blue Cheese

Slice two fresh pears thinly and fan them all over the pizza base.

Crumble some blue cheese such as gorgonzola over the sliced pears and bake on the bottom shelf of the oven for 15 minutes at 240C.



EATING with granny

The Apple Isle has a long history of apple-growing, with the first apples planted here in 1788. The notorious Captain Bligh on the good ship Bounty sailed into Adventure Bay on Bruny Island and planted three apple trees. Apparently one thrived ... and so began one of Tasmania's main industries.

Several apple varieties popular in many countries were first developed in Tasmania – including croftons and democrats.

The apple season is with us again this autumn and we're lucky to have orchards at both ends of the state. Red and golden delicious, pink lady, fuji, gala, gravenstein ... what a mouth-watering range!

One of my favourites is granny smith, an Australian creation. It was first grown by Maria Ann Smith in Sydney in 1876 and is now one of the most popular varieties around the world.

Granny smiths make great apple sauce for your roast pork and they are a wonderful apple for desserts.

Apple crumble

Peel, core and slice two apples. Place in a lightly buttered baking dish with ¼ cup castor sugar and 2 tablespoons of sultanas. Top with toasted muesli and bake until apples are tender.

Baked apples

Soak sultanas and other chopped dried fruits together with some nuts in rum. Core whole apples (one per serve) and score the skin around the diameter. Put apples in a lightly buttered baking dish. Stuff with the dried fruit and nuts, add a knob of butter on each apple and bake at 180C for 30-45 minutes.

MASTER PIZZA CHEF! Four great prizes to be won

Create a great pizza and mail us your recipe! There are four great prizes to be won – two for mums/dads and two for students. Each of the four winners will win a set of pizza making equipment valued at \$100. Each winner will also receive a framed certificate signed by Mayor Tony Foster and Uncle Chris. The winners will also be featured in the April edition of Brighton Community News. **Send your entry to:** Uncle Chris Competition, Brighton Council, 1 Tivoli Road, Gagebrook, Tas 7030. Make sure you include your address and phone number. If you're a student, tell us your age.

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with tony fawcett



how to grow your own compost!

Want to have the freshest, tastiest, healthiest vegies and fruit?

It's really quite easy. But you first have to feed your soil.

Like us humans, plants need nourishment to perform at their best.

With vegies, much of that nourishment comes from compost added to the soil.

You can buy a couple of bags of ready-made compost and dig it into your soil. But it's much cheaper (do it right and it's practically free) and green friendly to make it yourself.

As well as adding nutrients, compost helps unclog clay soils and makes sandy soils better able to retain moisture. That means better vegies.

GETTING started

You can set up your own DIY composting operation.

This can be a simple compost heap. Or, better still, with some second-hand timber and a few sheets of old corrugated iron or some wire mesh you can make several open-fronted bays, so you can fork your raw material from one to another to speed up the process. For plenty of design ideas, Google "compost heap" images.

No matter what method you decide on, build your compost heap directly on to the ground (preferably in a shady spot) so



micro-organisms, which occur naturally in the soil and which break down compost ingredients, have free access.

GREEN and brown

The secret with a compost heap is to "feed" it with a good mix of green and brown ingredients.

The greens include chopped up garden prunings, nitrogen-rich lawn clippings and fruit and vegie scraps from the kitchen. You can even chuck in used tea bags.

The browns are things like decayed autumn leaves, sawdust, straw, shredded paper, wood chips and even ash.

Include plenty of variety. You can put in horse, cow, sheep or chicken manure, but avoid cat or dog droppings and larger pieces of woody material.

Even weeds that have not gone to seed can go in. If they have gone to seed, first place them in a clear plastic bag in the sun for a couple of weeks (this heat treatment will stop them multiplying).

Work at adding one green layer after one brown layer.

The heap should be kept moist (not sodden) and turned with a fork about once a week to help aeration. If a heap is too moist it will become smelly, so in wet weather you might need to cover it.

First off, your heap might give off steam because of heat caused by the action of fungi and bacteria involved in the decomposition process. This should slow as decomposition nears completion.

As too much heat can decrease decomposition, you can slow this by more frequent forking over of the material.

Inserting a length of slotted plastic pipe vertically into the centre of the heap will encourage aeration.

After three to six months your compost should be ready. Then simply dig it into your vegie garden beds. You can also apply it as mulch to the surface of beds to retain moisture and blanket out weeds.

Keep adding compost annually and your vegies will love you.

Never leave food scraps exposed on your compost heap as these can attract mice, rats and flies – and always wash your hands after working with compost.

WHAT can go into compost

- Lawn clippings
- Weeds
- Leaves
- Cow, horse, sheep and chicken manure
- Mulched clippings
- Chook litter
- Sawdust
- Paper cut into narrow strips
- Straw
- Fruit and vegetable peelings
- Tea bags

AID the environment

Making a compost heap is a simple way to help the environment. Apart from reducing household waste by 30% or more, you will be helping to restrict harmful greenhouse gases.

A well-aerated compost heap fed with kitchen scraps, lawn clippings etc produces carbon dioxide rather than the more harmful methane, given off when the same material is deposited as landfill where oxygen is not available. Methane is claimed to have 25 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide. The key is maintaining good aeration so your heap always has plenty of oxygen.

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my top 13 spices

Allspice

The flavour is like a blend of cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves. Allspice enhances the flavour of most other spices. It can be used in both sweet and savoury dishes, from cakes to sauces to meatloaf.

Caraway

Caraway seeds have a sweet peppery aroma and features. Used in sauerkraut, coleslaw, goulash, potato and cheese dishes, bread and sausages.

Cardamom

Has a pungent smell. Used in sweet and savoury dishes and essential in garam masala, curries and other Indian dishes.

Chillies

Fresh or dried, these can be used in moderation in most of our cooking. Removing the seeds and placenta (the white part to which the seeds are attached), will reduce the heat.

Cinnamon

The bouquet is exotic and fragrant and the flavour is sweet and warm. Cinnamon is used in a multitude of dishes around the world – casseroles, rice dishes, poached fruit, cakes, pastries and biscuits.

Cloves

The warm, pungent aroma is used in Chinese five spice powder, curry powder and pickling onions and preserves. Whole cloves are used in flavouring pickled meats.

Cumin

Cumin has a spicy aroma with a slightly pungent taste. It's a key ingredient in curries and Moroccan lamb dishes and in chilli con carne.

Fennel

Fennel has a great affinity with fish, especially oily fish like salmon. It also complements pork and lamb. Ground fennel is used in curry powders and Chinese five spices. Crushed seeds are used in breads, cakes and biscuits.

Nutmeg

A traditional flavouring for cakes, gingerbread, fruit or milk puddings, apple pie and in white sauce or cheese sauce. A pinch of it also livens up mashed potato. At night a glass of warm milk with a sprinkling of freshly grated nutmeg should send you off to dreamland.

Paprika

An essential for goulash. I also use it to make a savoury rub for meats and chicken dishes – mix equal proportions of paprika, salt and pepper.

Pepper

The King of Spices. The most commonly used ones are white and black pepper corns. Freshly ground in a mill is best. Use white pepper in white sauces, so it doesn't look like dirt when served up.

Star Anise

One of the most important spices in Chinese cuisine and the dominant flavour in Chinese five spice powder. It's also used in oxtail soup and fish soups.

Turmeric

Widely used in making curry powder. Some people use turmeric as a cheap substitute for saffron, but it's definitely no replacement. It only substitutes the colour.