

Chicago Thin-Crust (Tavern-Style) Pizza With Sausage and Giardiniera

By J. Kenji López-Alt

Total Time 35 minutes, plus at least
3½ hours for the dough

Rating ★★☆☆☆ (497)

Tavern-style pizza is not particularly difficult compared with other styles, but it does take a good amount of time from start to finish — several days in fact — but it's largely hands-off. And, on the actual day of baking, you don't have to deal with stretching or tossing dough, making it perfect for parties or for topping with kids.

This recipe is part of our complete recipe for a [Chicago thin-crust pizza](#). View the recipes for the [dough](#), [Chicago-style Italian sausage](#) and [accompanying sauce](#).

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 2 (14-inch) pizzas

FOR EACH PIZZA

- ¾ cup mild or hot giardiniera (see Tips)
- Semolina or cornmeal, for dusting
- 1 stretched, cured Chicago thin-crust (tavern-style) pizza dough skin
- ¾ to 1 cup pizza sauce for Chicago thin-crust, more or less to taste, or use store-bought pizza sauce
- 2 ounces finely shredded or powdered Pecorino Romano or Parmesan
- 8 to 12 ounces full-fat low-moisture mozzarella, shredded, more or less to taste (see Tips)
- ½ recipe (about 8 ounces) Chicago-style Italian sausage, or use store-bought (raw bulk sausage or raw cased sausage with casings removed)

PREPARATION

Step 1

At least 45 minutes before baking, set a baking steel or stone (larger than 14 inches, see Tips) on an oven rack in the lower-middle position and heat the oven to 500 degrees. Drain excess oil from the giardiniera in a fine-mesh strainer, tossing to get as much off as possible. Discard the oil and set aside the giardiniera.

Step 2

When the oven is heated and you're ready to bake, dust a pizza peel with semolina or cornmeal. Lift cured pizza skin with the parchment or butcher paper still attached. The top (exposed) side will be drier than the underside. Place the pizza skin on the peel with the drier side facing down (so the papered side faces up). Peel off the parchment paper or butcher paper and discard. Using a fork, poke the crust all over to prevent large bubbles from forming.

Step 3

Spread the sauce evenly over the entire surface of the pizza, all the way to the edges. Sprinkle with half the Romano or Parmesan. Spread the mozzarella evenly over the entire surface, spreading it all the way to the edges. Use your fingertips to dollop marble-size pieces of the raw sausage all over the pizza. Sprinkle with the giardiniera.

Step 4

Give the pizza peel a few shakes to make sure the pizza is still loose (if it sticks at all, using a metal spatula or pizza peel to loosen it), then transfer the pizza to the heated baking steel or stone. Bake until the pizza is as done as you like it. (If you like yours browned and bubbly in the center and lightly charred at the edges, that'll be about 10 minutes, depending on your oven.) You can use a metal pizza peel to lift the edges of the pizza and peek underneath as it bakes to ensure the bottom is done to your liking.

Step 5

Transfer the pizza to a cutting board and sprinkle immediately with the remaining Romano or Parmesan. Allow to rest for 3 minutes, cut into 1½- to 2-inch squares, and serve immediately. Let the oven reheat for at least 10 minutes before baking subsequent pizzas.

TIPS

This style of pizza works best with minimal toppings—two to three items max. Sausage and giardiniera is a classic combination in the Chicago area. I like using J.P. Graziano hot giardiniera, which is available by mail order.

Do not use Italian-style (fresh) mozzarella for this pizza. If you cannot find full-fat low-moisture mozzarella, use a combination of widely available part-skim low-moisture mozzarella and shredded Monterey Jack. The cheeses will melt better if you grate them yourself, but pre-shredded can be used in a pinch.

If you do not have a baking stone or steel at least 14 inches square, 12-inch pizzas can also be baked on smaller stones or on the back of a large overturned aluminum sheet tray set on an oven rack while the oven heats. Follow the recipe for 12-inch pizza dough balls as outlined in the Tip for the Chicago thin-crust (tavern-style) pizza dough.

Private Notes

Leave a Private Note on this recipe and see it here.