



Tips for Tackling 9 Common Pizza Performance Challenges



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Answers That Could Improve Your Pies

We all have our own idea of what makes a “perfect pie.” For some it’s heaping it high with lots of meat and cheese; for others it’s a paper-thin crust drizzled with olive oil, some fresh basil and thick slices of fresh mozzarella – and there are about a million options in between.

But one thing that’s always high on people’s lists of pizza must-haves is the right crust: whether thick, thin, or in-between, your patrons expect a certain crispness, texture and flavor. Whether you’re using frozen dough balls, par-baked thins, or formed live dough crusts, here are a few key pointers to help you consistently create the best foundation for your pies.

ISSUES RELATED TO PROOFING

1. Crusts Taste & Look Different Each Time

This is a common problem when starting with fresh dough balls and it’s often caused during the “proofing” stage. Proofing is a process that allows your crust to properly rise. When the yeast digests the sugar it produces carbon dioxide; the carbon dioxide then collects in air cells that expand, causing the dough to increase in volume. Too much or too little expansion affects the crust’s flavor and how well it bakes. Under-risen dough has a biscuit flavor; over-risen dough has a very bland flavor and a white-ish color.

Solution

Make sure you’re carefully managing the proofing process. This means giving every dough ball the same amount of proofing time, ensuring that the dough is at the right temperature. Properly risen dough produces a full-bodied, yeast bread flavor with a golden brown surface and is about 1 to 2.5 times bigger than its original size.

2. Bubbles In The Crust

Bubbles are caused by trapped moisture and carbon dioxide that’s produced when fermented dough expands quickly during baking. Small bubbles don’t hurt your pie (and are actually appealing to many), but large bubbles can cause cheese and toppings to slide off bubbled areas, detracting from its appearance.

Solution

You can prevent big bubbles by rolling over the crust thoroughly with a dough docker before making the pizza, and by watching your pie as it’s being baked – if you start to see a large bubble forming, pop it with a long metal utensil.



If you've got bubbles all over the crust, this means the dough was too cold when put in to bake. To avoid this, make sure your dough is properly proofed; your dough is ready when it's almost completely lost its chill, and has about doubled in size.

3. Crust Won't Brown

A crust that doesn't brown is usually caused by the dough being over-proofed. Over-proofing leads to the sugar and yeast being exhausted and no longer able to provide browning properties.

Solution

For the ideal browning, make sure your dough is not over- or under-proofed (and that you're baking at the right temperature).

4. Holes in Crust

If your crusts rip when you're rolling or tossing them, it probably means the gluten in the flour hasn't developed enough. If you're trying to stretch the dough and it's not cooperating, it hasn't had enough time in proofing. This is often referred to as a dough being "bucky."

Solution

In either case, the dough needs more proofing. If you can't stretch it easily, only stretch the crust as much as you can, then let it rest about 10 more minutes on a floured surface. This will allow more proofing and for gluten to develop.

5. Chewy Crust

A chewy crust is most often the result of a finished dough temperature that's too low. If the dough temp is too low, the right amount of fermentation won't happen. As a result, the dough won't rise properly and will become thick and chewy.

Solution

Use a simple kitchen thermometer to make sure your dough is at the proper temperature before rolling or tossing.

ISSUES RELATED TO BAKING

6. Sticky Crust

Sticky dough is almost always the result of not using enough dusting flour (or corn meal) when you roll out your dough.

Solution

Use plenty of flour! Don't worry about over-flouring – you can brush off any excess before you put the pizza on the peel.



7. Soggy Crust

There are a number of causes of a soggy crust: water-logged ingredients, too much fat in the meat, or too much liquid in the sauce (or simply too much sauce on the pie).

Solution

Fresh tomatoes, marinated artichokes, and olives all contain a lot of water and will “leak” onto the pie, causing a soggy crust that won’t hold up well. Try patting these ingredients dry before putting them on the pie, and choose a thicker, less watery sauce.

8. Pizza Isn’t Baking Evenly

No one wants to bite into a pie with an overdone crust and undercooked toppings!

Solution

Check your oven temperature – often uneven crusts are caused by temps that are too high; this will cause a dark crust and undercooked toppings. If you’re using the right temperature but still having this issue, you might have too much topping on the pie.

9. Crust Is Too Thick or Too Thin

Too thin and the crust won’t hold the toppings; too thick and the crust will have the texture of hard, chewy bread.

Solution

This is an easy one: Try using a sheeter or rolling pin to roll the dough ball about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the finished diameter, then toss by hand. Chances are, your crust will have a more even thickness across the center.

When it comes to the perfect pie, one thing is the same no matter who you talk to: it all starts with the crust. And, as the pizza crust experts, we’re eager to help you make spectacular pies patrons will come back for again and again. Want to know more about how we can help grow your business? Reach out in the way that’s most convenient to you – they’re all listed at the bottom of this page!

