



# How to Create SOPs for Your Pizza Operation

## *Standard Operating Procedures for Consistent Quality and Customer Satisfaction*

Every time one of your customers bites into a slice of your pizza, they savor the distinct combinations of flavor and texture your pies offer. And they expect to be delighted in the same way with each visit and each pie.

But what happens when not every employee creates a pizza the same way or based on personal preference? Whether it's an underproofed crust, a little more sauce here, or a tad fewer pepperoni slices there — customers will notice. The challenge to providing a dependable experience is even greater if you have multiple locations.





## USE SOPs TO CREATE CONSISTENCY

Establishing a set of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for your pizza operation will not only set expectations for your employees and improve quality, it can also save money, streamline the training process, reduce waste and, most importantly, deliver on what customers have come to expect so they keep coming back time and again.

In this guide we'll walk through:

- The types of SOPs every pizza operation needs
- What to include in an SOP
- A sample SOP that you can use today, and as a guide for creating additional documents for your kitchen

## IMPORTANT TYPES OF SOPs

Your customers' expectations when they order a pizza are simple: consistent, fresh and flavorful. However, to deliver this across multiple locations and various staff can be anything but simple. SOPs can help streamline the effort it takes to make their dining experience a pleasurable one. Here are some examples of SOPs that can improve your operations and ensure customer satisfaction.

### Pizza Preparation

Start with procedures for thawing times for crusts and proofing instructions for dough balls. Then create step-by-step instructions on how to prepare each size and type of pizza on your menu. Include measurements of ingredients and the order in which they're prepared, handling instructions, recommended pans or pizza screens, and cooking times and temperatures. Don't forget to include presentation instructions like number of slices and other relevant information.

### Server Checklist

A kitchen SOP for waitstaff should focus on procedures for accurate order taking, food presentation and delivery. Provide guidelines for servers to fill out their orders clearly and for confirming accuracy before food is set in front of the customer so any errors can be corrected before a complaint is raised. Other steps might include instructions on table settings, busing responsibilities, and what to do if a customer order isn't correct.



## Food Safety

It only takes one incident of food-borne illness to tarnish a restaurant's good reputation. Set requirements for every worker who enters your kitchen and insist on compliance. Some items you'll want to cover include:

- Cleaning and sanitizing food contact surfaces
- Cross-contamination control
- Proper storage of food and cleaning supplies
- Controlling time and temperature of cooked items
- Cleaning up of bodily fluids
- Personal hygiene and handwashing
- Pest control

Many food safety guidelines are recommended by the USDA and other institutions. With a simple online search, you'll find samples of Food Safety SOPs freely available that can serve as a template for your operation.

## Storage & Inventory

Setting up a system for managing your food deliveries and managing your inventory will maximize space minimize the time it takes your staff to search for items — ultimately reducing waste and saving money. Outline exactly what needs to happen when a food delivery arrives, including procedures for labeling, handling and rotating inventory. Also set up a plan for properly disposing of expired products and the steps to take if a product is nearing expiration.

## Equipment Cleaning and Maintenance

Thousands of dollars are invested in ovens, coolers, fryers, sinks, commercial vents and more. Proper cleaning and maintenance of equipment will extend its life and result in considerable savings over time, not to mention a cleaner and safer working environment. Outline proper methods including which cleaning products to use on each piece of equipment. Establish routine maintenance schedules and safety checklists.



## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN AN SOP

For an SOP to be an effective resource, it needs to be clear, concise and easy to follow. If it lacks detail, important steps may be missed; too much detail and the process you're trying to explain becomes cumbersome, time-consuming and confusing.

Use these tips to make each SOP a resource that actually gets the quality results you want:

### Step-by-step Instructions

A simple numbered list or bullet points will make any process more clear. Avoid lengthy paragraphs and unnecessary wording. Straight and to-the-point is best.

### Images

Research has proven that people remember images much better than words, and images can serve as a quick reference at a glance. Incorporate pictures or graphics into your SOPs to demonstrate techniques and standards such as how to properly stretch a dough ball or organize the pizza prep counter. Not an artist? Don't underestimate the effectiveness of simple photos taken during each step in a process — simply grab your smartphone.



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**Visuals are processed 60,000  
times faster than text.**

(3M research)

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### Precise Quantities

It's critical to outline exact measurements in a Pizza Prep SOP, for example. A "handful" of sliced mushrooms can vary greatly depending on whose hand it is. Instead, use dedicated measuring utensils, and spell out which ingredients need to be weighed (e.g., for a 12" crust use the 3 oz. sauce ladle, 22 pepperoni slices, and 8 oz. mozzarella cheese).

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**It's critical to outline exact  
measurements in a Pizza Prep  
SOP. Consider creating a Pizza  
Component Chart for your most  
popular pizza recipes.**

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## SAMPLE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP)

The following is an SOP outlining how to proof, hand-stretch, and prepare a pizza using a dough ball. Use it as an example of how you might craft your own SOPs.

### How to Proof a 20 oz. Pizza Dough Ball

1. Remove desired number of units from case for proofing, reseal and return remaining units to freezer.



2. Place up to eight 20 oz. dough balls onto an ungreased sheet pan or individually in proofing boxes; wrap tightly with foodservice film or cover with lid.



3. Place dough to be proofed into reach-in cooler or onto speed rack and roll into walk-in refrigerator; proof under refrigeration for 48 hours from when they were removed from the freezer.



4. Proof at room temperature for up to 30 minutes before use to aid in hand-stretching; if 30 minutes has elapsed, return dough balls to refrigerator until ready for use.



**Note:** Dough balls have a refrigerated shelf life of up to 4 days once thawed, 5 days from frozen.



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**Dough balls are  
best baked on  
oven hearth.**

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## How to Hand Toss a Pizza Dough Ball



1. Remove proofed dough ball from sheet pan or proofing box. Try to maintain its round shape.



2. Lightly dust both sides of dough ball with flour for easy handling.



3. Press fingers around edge of dough ball creating  $\frac{1}{2}$ " outer ring which will later become the crust.



4. Using both hands, press down through the center of the dough ball, rotate and repeat. **Note:** It is important to push down and avoid pushing out from center as this could result in weak spots when stretching the dough.



5. Flip the dough ball over and use a docker to roll over the dough. Push all the way through the middle of the dough ball out to the edge. Flip the dough over and repeat.



6. Pick up dough with both hands. Use a loose fist; put both hands under dough as close to the edge as possible. Hands should be just inside outer crust ring formed in step 3.



7. Slowly pull hands apart approximately 4". Rotate dough in a circular motion by repeatedly moving hands together and pulling apart. Continue until the dough is stretched to desired size.



8. Arrange on pizza peel coated with cornmeal.



9. Sauce, cheese and top with desired ingredients.





For more expert tips related to pizza operations — from proofing techniques to marketing ideas — [subscribe to the Alive & Kickin' Pizza Crust blog!](#)



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