



How to Achieve Perfectly Proofed Pizza Dough

Best Practices & Quick Reference Guide

A great-tasting pizza requires more than just the right toppings and baking methods. The crust is the foundation of any great pizza, and proper dough preparation is the key to success. Achieving a light, airy texture along with the crust thickness you're looking for starts with the process of proofing your rolled out dough or dough ball. Miss this step and the results can be disappointing — for you and your patrons!

Use this quick reference guide to help you properly proof your dough to ensure consistent quality, taste and texture every time.



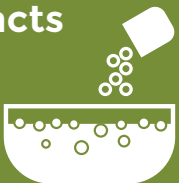


What Kind of Dough Needs Proofing?

Yeast dough requires proofing through the process of fermentation.

In general, thick crust or pan pizzas fall into this category. Not all yeast doughs need to be proofed, however. Par-baked and live dough crusts require no proofing. While pre-made frozen dough balls help in cutting prep time, allowing them to proof properly is essential to ensure performance.

Fermentation Facts



When exposed to proper temperatures, yeast digests sugar and produces carbon dioxide gas that collects in tiny air cells, causing them to expand. As a result, the dough increases in volume.

- *Fermentation is slowest at 33°F*
- *Fermentation accelerates as temperatures rise, up to 100°F, after which it begins to slow*
- *Fermentation stops when it reaches 140°F and the yeast dies*



In What Form Should Dough be Proofed?

Dough Balls: Hearth-baked pizzas and most screen pizzas are proofed in dough ball form.

Rolled Out: Scratch-made pan pizza dough is usually proofed after it's rolled out and has been placed in the pan.



Proper Proofing Techniques

Follow these best practices for proper dough management and proofing success:

Step 1 Divide dough into smaller pieces

Larger bulk pieces of dough take longer to cool or warm. Note that if you're using pre-made dough balls from a supplier, such as The Dough Shop by Alive & Kickin', your dough will be pre-portioned for you. Cutting out the need for this step will save you time and ensure consistency.

Step 2 Use an ungreased bakery-style sheet pan

- Place the trays on a speed rack
- Allow ample room around each dough ball to double in size and stay as round as possible after it is proofed. Wrap tightly with foodservice film.
- Avoid using dough totes — these limit airflow and result in uneven thawing and proofing. If you are using totes make sure to cross stack while proofing for better airflow.

Step 3 Provide airflow

Cold air must be able to circulate completely around the trays.

- Keep trays off the floor
- Keep a 3" gap between stacks and between the trays and cooler wall
- After dough reaches 40°F, stacks can be moved closer together

Step 4 Lower the refrigerator temperature

If your refrigerator is above 38°F, consider lowering the temperature to 34° - 36°F.



Shelf Life of Thawed Dough

Dough balls are good for a max of 5 days from the time you pull them out of the freezer. After that, the yeast is spent.



Step 5 Keep the door closed

Minimize the time that dough is above 40°F to keep dough from over-rising and failing. If the refrigerator door is routinely opened, temperatures can quickly spike to 50-60°F, and it could take an hour for temperatures to drop back down to an appropriate level.

Step 6 Proof for minimum of 24-48 hours

24-48 hours is good, depending on the size of dough ball you are using and the temperature.

Step 7 Place dough balls at room temperature for final proofing prior to baking

- This step makes it easier to hand stretch
- Allow the dough to sit at room temperature for up to 30 minutes
- If 30 minutes has elapsed, return the dough balls to the refrigerator until ready for use

Proofing Time and Temperature

Size	Time
4-10 oz.	24 hours
11-18 oz.	36 hours
19-32 oz.	48 hours



Signs of Successfully Proofed Dough

Properly Risen:

- Have slightly yellow color prior to cooking
- Nearly doubles in volume
- Holds indentation when gently poked
- Finished product will be golden brown with small to medium blisters and no gum line



Signs of Poorly Proofed Dough

Under-proofed:

- Soft white in color
- Firm to the touch, difficult to hand toss or stretch
- Finished product will be white to light tan in color with no blisters and a small gum line

Over-proofed:

- Gray in color and flat
- Collapses when gently poked, sticky and soft to the touch
- Finished product will be very brown with small blisters and negligible lift



How do I determine how much dough to proof?

In addition to managing dough temperature and proofing, two other conditions play a key role in dough management:

- **Production planning.** To achieve proper rise, dough-making must be synchronized with pizza production. Tracking pizza sales helps. In short, before each dough-making session, a manager should project dough consumption for the upcoming period and subtract the amount on hand. Then take that amount of dough, plus a 10% buffer, out of the freezer.
- **Rotation and First-In-First-Out (FIFO).** Refrigerated dough should be tagged, showing when it was taken out. Then, stock should be rotated in the cooler so the oldest is always used first. Without proper rotation, over- and under-risen dough results.



Rely on the pizza crust experts at Alive & Kickin' to help you create the perfect crust every time. Reach out to us for more preparation tips and information about our delicious varieties of custom crust recipes today.

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