



This is a go-to pizza recipe that is not 100 percent homemade, but it is great for customizing individual pizzas, and it comes together quickly if - for example - a bunch of hungry teenagers show up at your house.

Cheater's Pizza

Let me be clear: I prefer my homemade, from-scratch pizza. Sometimes, though, my Cheater's Pizza comes in handy. For example, Joe had a business dinner the other night - a Friday - the day we usually enjoy homemade pizza for our main meal. I resorted to Cheater's Pizza for Matt and me.

What I like most about this recipe is that each pizza easily can be customized. I prefer veggies. Matt prefers meat. Joe usually has a combination. The pizzas come together and cook quickly, because you are using an already made pita pocket for the base. All that's required, really, is to crisp up the crust and let the toppings heat through.

Ingredients

Store-bought pita pockets - you can use white or wheat

Extra virgin olive oil or canola oil (or spray)

Provolone cheese, thinly sliced

Pizza sauce - I like Prego regular tomato sauce if not using homemade

Herbs/seasoning of your choice. For example: Italian seasoning, oregano, crushed red peppers

Shredded mozzarella

Toppings of your choice - just make sure all meat/poultry toppings are pre-cooked.

Pre-heat a sheet pan or pizza pan, 425 degrees F for about 15 minutes. Test in advance to make sure all of your pitas fit on the pan. If not, use two pans, or bake in batches.

Spray the bottom of the pita with canola or olive oil spray, or brush lightly with oil. This will be the bottom of your pizza. (Note: You don't open the pita. Leave it flat and unopened in a full circle.)

Take the pre-heated pan out of the oven, and put the pitas on it (olive oil side down). You should hear a sizzle. That's good. It means the pan is nice and hot. Go ahead and build your pizzas right on the pan.

Put a light layer of cheese on the pita. I use thinly sliced provolone. I do this so that the cheese creates a barrier between the pita and the sauce; it keeps the pita from getting soggy.

On top of the provolone cheese layer, add your sauce. Sprinkle the sauce with any herbs/seasonings of your choice. I like crushed red pepper, dried oregano and Italian seasoning.

Then add the shredded mozzarella, and your toppings. The Cheater's Pizza in the photo (above) has freshly sliced tomato, feta cheese, and fresh thyme. Matt's pizza was a traditional pepperoni. You can make this pizza any way you want - just don't use raw meats because there is not enough baking time to bring the raw meat up to a safe-for-eating temperature.

Bake the pitas for 12 minutes, 425 degrees. Ovens vary, so keep an eye on your food.

Sometimes I broil the pitas for 1-2 minutes at the end of the baking time, so that the cheese browns a little and the top is very hot. This step is completely optional.

When your pita is crusty and the cheese is melted, remove your Cheater's Pizza from the oven. Cut into four equal pieces, and enjoy your personalized lunch or dinner. Or cut into small squares and serve as an appetizer!

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