

HOW TO MAKE A HOSTAGE PIZZA

BY: NOAH REGAN

The first thing you do is rub or brush the inner cooking surface of each 14” round pizza pan with a thin layer of olive oil (about 1 tbsp.). Then set those pans aside. Lightly dust your work surface with flour. We at *Papa Michelina’s Pizza Ristorante* use bread flour as opposed to all-purpose flour. Bread flour is white flour made from hard, high-protein wheat. It has more gluten strength and protein content than your average flour. It is conditioned with ascorbic acid, which increases volume and creates a better texture. It is the absolute best choice for yeast products.

Place a 15oz. prepared dough ball in the center of your work surface. Sprinkle a little flour on top of the dough and begin flattening the ball with your hands until it’s about 1” thick. While you are flattening the dough, be sure that you are creating a circular shape.

One of the bank clerks is rumored to be dead.

With a rolling pin, begin rolling the circular sheet of dough that you have just created to a thickness of 1/4” to 3/8” and 16” to 18” in diameter. Continue to dust your sheet of dough with flour, as necessary, to keep the dough from sticking to the rolling pin or work surface.

A woman—middle-aged. No name.

Roll from the center outward. It’s best to have a rhythm and a pattern. I personally start rolling to the top, then bottom, then left and finally the right. Repeat this process several times as the dough begins to stretch outward. It will take quite a few passes with the rolling pin. The elastic pizza dough will always try to draw back into its original shape.

Place the flat circle of dough into the center of the olive oil rubbed pan. You will find that the circle of dough that you have created will be too large for the pizza pan and will droop over the edge. This is what you want. Starting from the center of the dough, draw the dough evenly out to the edge of the pan. This will allow any air trapped between the dough and pan to escape. Once you are satisfied, curl the excess dough inward to form a nice, plump crusted edge.

They claim that they didn’t mean to kill her. She tried to snatch a gun that was pointed at her and it went off. She bled-out from an abdominal wound behind her teller’s station.

Ladle 7 to 8oz. of pizza sauce into the middle of your circle of dough. We at *Papa Michelina’s Pizza Ristorante* use pizza sauce freshly prepared each day. The sauce contains: fresh tomato paste, parmesan cheese, minced garlic, onion powder, dried oregano, dried basil, black pepper, a little honey and

of course the secret family ingredients. I'm not allowed to know the additional ingredients that are included in the signature *Papa Michelina's Pizza Ristorante* sauce which gives it that traditional taste of Tuscany. What I *do* know is that it tastes exactly like *Domino's* pizza sauce.

With the bottom of the ladle, spread the sauce evenly over the surface of the dough starting with small circles from the center and slowly work your way to the outside edge. Be sure to stop $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 1" of the crust.

Sometimes it doesn't pay to be a hero.

The pizza dough that isn't covered with the signature sauce will rise and crisp more quickly; creating the classic, puffed edge of the pizza. Next, spread a layer of shredded cheese (about 2 cups) over the sauce. Evenly distribute the cheese on top of the pizza to create a nice bed to arrange your toppings.

The hostage takers are a group of radical Muslims. Apparently they weren't intending a hostage situation. I don't think anyone does. But since the robbery didn't go as planned the hostage takers are using this opportunity as a soap box to espouse their descent against Western society. News agencies are personally calling the bank to speak with the hostage takers. The media is eating it up; even going so far as allowing the hostage takers to speak live on television via bank phone. The hostage takers flat out admit that they were going to use the money to buy ingredients necessary to make a bomb that would be used against us "infidels" in the future. They proudly announced that they are a part of a terrorist sleeper cell that is centralized in Yemen. They obviously have nothing to lose and will talk to anyone who is willing to listen.

Perform the previous steps however many times as necessary. As per this order, I am to prepare six pizzas. Given your average mix of adult male/females, one *Papa Michelina's Pizza Ristorante* pizza will feed 3 to 4 people. That means there is anywhere from 18 to 24 people inside the bank. The robbery happened a little after eight o'clock this morning just after the bank opened. It is now almost three o'clock in the afternoon. Law enforcement probably over-estimated the amount of pizza necessary because no one in that bank has eaten since breakfast. They most likely figured one pizza for every two people. That means that there are probably only twelve people in that bank including the hostage takers. Eleven if you subtract the dead bank teller.

This pizza order calls for five pepperoni pizzas and one plain cheese pizza. Muslims don't eat pork—especially radical Muslims who greatly adhere to Islamic doctrine. Hostages don't request certain toppings on their pizza. When a masked man is pressing a gun to your temple that is not the time to say that you're a vegetarian, or that you prefer thin crust because you would like to shed a few pounds before your sister's wedding. When you are a hostage, dieting is the last thought in your mind.

Five pepperoni. One cheese. The five pepperoni pizzas are for the hostages. The one cheese is for the hostage takers. One pizza for two people. There are only two hostage takers.

The news reporter says that the SWAT team promises that they will not advance on the bank so long as they can be guaranteed that no other hostages will be harmed. The reporter said "harmed" because she didn't want to say "killed". Nothing is secret anymore. As soon as information comes through, reporters inform the masses. The reporter on TV mentioned specifically that the pizza will be arriving

from *Papa Michelina's*. I don't know if my boss is pissed or not. I can't decide if it is good publicity or bad.

One of the hostage takers is still going on an anti-American diatribe from a bank phone that is being broadcasted on a local news channel. His accent is thick. I can't fully understand him. I've stopped listening. I go back to making his pizza.

Here at *Papa Michelina's Pizza Ristorante* whenever a customer orders a cheese pizza we refuse to use just grated mozzarella cheese. To ensure that you have a quality Tuscan pizza experience we use three different kinds of cheese on our cheese pizzas. Take 1/3 cup of Fontina cheese and spread it on top of the mozzarella cheese that is already in place. Fontina cheese is a cow's milk Italian cheese. Fontina cheese is fairly pungent and has a very intense flavor; hence why you only use 1/3 cup of Fontina and not 3/4 cup like the mozzarella. It isn't wise to order a cheese pizza that is topped with Fontina cheese on a first date, unless you don't want a kiss at the end of the night.

Finally you add 1/2 cup of dried goat's cheese. Cheese made from goat's milk is characteristically tarter than cheese made from cow's milk. What the terrorists don't know as that we at *Papa Michelina's Pizza Ristorante* cater to the growing Islamic population and offer a variety a pizzas topped with *Halal* meat. *Halal* meat is considerably prepared in accordance to strict Islamic law. It's like kosher, but specifically for individuals of the Islamic faith. The *Halal* meat that we use for our pizzas is from cattle that are slaughtered using a well sharpened knife that makes a swift, deep incision on the front of the animal's throat. The well-placed incision specifically cuts the carotid artery, windpipe and jugular veins, but leaves the spinal cord intact. *Halal* rules state that animal cannot be stunned prior to slaughter and a Muslim must perform the slaughter and any flowing blood should be completely drained. The radicals holding the people in the bank hostage don't know about *Papa Michelina's Pizza Ristorante's* ethnic dietary accommodations, so they will have to settle for our three cheese pizza instead.

Cut the pepperoni into thin slices, preferably 1/8" or thinner. Evenly distribute each slice of pepperoni in a circular pattern on the bed of mozzarella cheese. It usually takes twelve slices of pepperoni to cover a large 14" pizza. 5 pizzas with 12 slices of pepperoni on each pizza, you will need to carefully cut 60 slices of pepperoni. Then sprinkle a small amount of mozzarella cheese over the layer of pepperoni.

There is one final, optional step in the preparation of the three cheese pizza. And that is the usage of poison on the pizza. It is important not to use rat poison. It would take literally pounds of rat poison (which may be noticeable to the individuals consuming the pizza) and 4-6 days for the anti-coagulating poison to take effect.

It is beneficial if you have an employer who is impatient (like me) and refuses to wait 4-6 days to exterminate a rodent threat. Locate the floor safe in the back of the restaurant, just past the employee bathroom. Starting with a clockwise rotation, stop at the numerical month date of the owners wedding anniversary (8) then reverse your rotation counter clockwise and stop at the specific day of the owners wedding anniversary (14) then finally, rotating the dial clockwise once again, stop at the last two digits of the year of that wonderful occasion (61).

Once the safe is open remove the box of strychnine located at the bottom right corner. To ensure that you have the correct box, check the label, the consumption warning on the side of the box, and the strip of blue painters tap located on the top that states POISON!!! DO NOT TOUCH!!!

Instead of mixing the strychnine with expired cheese and leaving out in the back alley, using rubber cleaning gloves, take 2-3mg of strychnine and sprinkle it evenly over the top of the cheese pizza. If you have any doubts that what you are doing is risky or wrong, remind yourself that the hostage takers in question will not be abandoning their pizza to snag a slice of pizza that contains their forbidden meat. Also keep in mind, hostages will not likely ask a hostage taker that is armed and has been threatening them all morning if he plans to share that delicious three cheese pizza with everyone else.

2-3mg of strychnine should be more than enough. You do not want to use too much because strychnine is very bitter tasting and can be easily detectable if used in too large a quantity. To conceal the taste of the poison, add a liberal dusting of oregano and thyme to the surface of the pizza (free of charge). Immediately throw the rubber gloves that you used to handle the strychnine away, and please resist the urge to touch your eyes or mouth in the process.

Once the pizzas are prepared it is time to bake them. We at *Papa Michelina's Pizza Ristorante* use a conveyor oven to bake our gourmet pizzas. But it isn't just any conveyor oven. This conveyor oven features a static gas conveyor tunnel that cooks directly on stone to produce a product that has the taste of an authentic Italian stone deck oven. Place the six pizzas onto the refractory cooking surface. The double-stacked stone belt will slowly feed the pizzas into the forced-air oven. Cook the pizzas for 6 minutes at 520 degrees. Thicker pizzas like our *Garden di Fresco* and *Molto Meat* require additional cooking time at a lower temperature.

Side note: If you included the optional final step in your three cheese pizza, it is important to turn on the conveyor oven's exhaust fan to prevent any airborne exposure to the poison.

With six pizzas cooking for six minutes (while taking into consideration the deluxe double-stacked stone belt cooking surfaces) it will take eighteen minutes to cook. You can do whatever you like during this time. I like to spend this time thinking.

Three months ago I walked in on my wife fucking my brother.

I came down with the flu. At least that's what I told my manager. If you say that you're sick they will let you go home immediately. They don't want you handling the fresh ingredients with your infected fingers or coughing the virus onto the pizzas—contaminating the taste of Tuscany.

My wife had been complaining that I don't spend any time with her. I figured I would give her a nice surprise by playing *hookie* and taking her to the zoo. Upon opening my bedroom door the first thing to greet me was my brother's naked, gyrating ass. I stood there in the doorway silent. I stood there much longer than I should have. They didn't notice me. I watched them carry on. I considered turning around and going to the zoo by myself. My wife eventually spotted me over my brother's shoulder. She screamed at me. It was the kind of scream that is one part anger, two parts surprise with a dash of confusion.

My brother climbed off of my wife of three years and casually said *hey* to me. My wife didn't apologize. She proceeded to calmly tell me that she wants to separate. I didn't say a thing. Every time she

stopped talking she expected me to say something in defense. Anything. I did not. So she went on further into why she wanted to separate. At one point she said she was tired of fucking a loser. It was either that or she was tired of me being a fucking loser. I can't remember. I wish I could. She kept talking but I stopped listening to her after she said that she was tired of *fucking me* or *me being a fucking...* I just stood there looking at my brother's balls resting against the 720 thread count oversized goose-down comforter that our mother gave my wife and me as our wedding present.

My wife had the pleated Paris comforter pulled up to her collar bones. My brother didn't seem to care to cover himself up. He lied on his back with one leg casually bent at the knee and patiently gazed at my wife; subtly nodding while she made her points as to why I'm a fucking loser that doesn't deserve her. He wasn't nodding his head to mock me. He's simply a considerate attentive listener.

Two minutes left on the pizzas.

She eventually made her peace. I only knew she was done because I could no longer hear her talking. Like I said, I wasn't listening. My brother is the attentive listener.

I apologized to her and moved out the next day. I couldn't be outraged. If I was outraged that would mean that I disagreed with her.

Pizzas are done.

The melted cheese on your completed pizzas should be a light brown while the crust should be a medium to golden brown.

For a professional pizza cut I recommend a *stainless steel twin handle 20" pizza knife*. It not only does a superb job of cutting the pizza, but is the fastest, most efficient way to do it. With both hands palms down, on each respective handle, place the edge of the pizza knife at the edge of the pizza. The bottom of the pizza knife is shaped not unlike a rocking chair. In a precise, but forceful motion, rock the knife across the diameter of the pizza. Rotate the pizza 90 degrees and repeat the previous action. If you see a perfect cross cut into your pizza you did it correctly. Rotate the pizza 45 degrees and placing the knife between the previous cuts, rock the pizza knife through the pizza. Rotate the pizza 45 degrees one more time, then repeat previous action.

When slicing the pizzas, it is important to cut the pizza that you have laced with strychnine last for fear of contaminating the other pizzas.

The news reporters lost contact with the hostage takers. I don't know if the hostage taker got tired of talking or if law enforcement informed the reporters that they were jeopardizing the lives of the hostages. There is a news reporter standing behind a police barricade. There isn't anything happening. She's just blathering, filling time until something *does* happen.

A young officer standing behind her keeps telling her to move back away from the barricade. She's too busy talking into the camera. She can hear him though. She just chooses not to.

Moving her two feet further away from the barricade won't make any difference. The young cop just wants to be on television. He wants to show his parents that he is respected and has authority.

Neither of them *really* cares about the hostages inside. None of the people do.

But I do.

A similar situation happened a couple of years ago in Tennessee or something. There was a hostage situation at a bank then too. That time hostage negotiators ordered *Pizza Hut* pizza. Not a wise move if you are trying to appease men with guns. But then again, that's just my biased opinion. Usually in these hostage situations the hostage takers don't want law enforcement anywhere near them. They request that the pizza delivery guy brings them the pizza. Well this sap that worked as a *Pizza Hut* got a flak jacket slapped on his back; a helmet tossed on his head and then pushed in the direction of scary masked men with assault rifles.

It paid off for the guy. He was awarded the *Distinguished Civilian Honor Award*. He made national news and was mentioned in every late night talk show monologue. After his fifteen minutes of fame were over he went on to sue *Pizza Hut* for endangering his life by fulfilling duties not included in his job description. It didn't go to trial. Like all things involving large corporations with major PR firms, it was settled out of court.

I don't know how much the kid walked away with. It was never disclosed. But I'm sure it's enough that he'll never have to deliver another pizza again.

It was after that incident that our manager informed us that in the unlikely chance that it would ever happen to us, *Papa Michelina's Pizza Ristorante* is not responsible if you choose to deliver the pizzas in question. In the situation of a hostage delivery, the delivery person is no longer affiliated with *Papa Michelina's Pizza Ristorante*. And any actions that you may or may not do are entirely up to you and are in no way forced upon you by *Papa Michelina's Pizza Ristorante* or any employee therein.

It's all for glory and nothing else. The way it should be.

One of our delivery guys, Darby, is stepping up to the challenge. He's standing by the front counter with three insulated pizza delivery bags sandwiched under his arm. His eyes are glued to the television where still nothing is happening, but there is still much to talk about. The reporter is talking to a woman who may be the sibling to the woman who bled-out this morning. No one knows for sure who it was. The reporter has one hand on the bereaved, possible sister, and is asking sensitive questions like "What kind of a person was she?" and "Did she have a family of her own?" You can tell that the reporter is pleased to hear that the woman *did* have a family.

The more people you have crying the more people care.

I hand Darby the pizzas and he shoves them quickly into the red bags. Darby is a fucking loser like me. But this is his time to shine. This will be the day that he goes from a forgettable guy with a hunch-back and a two-dollar haircut to the desire of every young hot woman everywhere.

This is the day Darby will become a minimum wage hero.

Darby will be praised, but not as much as the genius that hatched the plan to take the guys out from the inside. I'll be the one that everyone will be talking about. Cable news shows will be asking me how I came up with such a plan, and how did I know that the people held hostage wouldn't eat the

poisoned pizza. My wife will realize that I am no longer a fucking loser, and my brother will immediately nod his head agreeing with her.

Darby tosses the pizzas into the back seat of his bird-shit-white Cavalier and is off.

Once the pizza delivery guy has left, all you can do is wait. Yes, if you have other pizza requests be sure to fulfill them, but it is important to keep one eye on the television. You certainly wouldn't want to miss anything. There isn't going to be much for an *average Joe* watching from a pizza kitchen to see. Yes, the television cameras will be pointed at the exterior of the bank, and the reporter will be droning on about the insidious things that may possibly be occurring inside, but we're not going to see a thing.

It starts with muscle spasms ten to twenty minutes after consumption. The spasms usually begin at the head and neck then eventually spread to every muscle of the body. The convulsions will progressively increase in intensity and will cause the backbones of those that consumed the poison to dramatically arch uncontrollably. Death eventually comes from asphyxiation caused by paralysis of the pathways that control breathing. It's one of the most disgusting and painful ways to die.

It's taking too long. Why isn't Darby there yet? Shouldn't there be a reporter crossing the yellow tape, stepping on the toes of the officers and asking this dopey pizza delivery guy why he's volunteered to risk his life to deliver those pizzas? I bet Darby will have some brave, stoic sentiments already locked and loaded for when he's interviewed afterward. He'll say something like "It's what I had to do" or "We promised those people pizza" maybe he'll go the funny route and say "Those guys are lousy tippers". He shouldn't use that line right after he delivers the pizza though. There are still lives in danger. He should save that joke for when he's the third guest on *Leno*. What he *should* say is "I just thought 'what if my own mother was held hostage in there'. I decided that I had to do it". That would be the one to say. That line would translate in the greatest amount of tail. Darby knows what he's doing. I trust him.

What the hell is taking him so long? It's been twenty minutes. My pizzas are getting cold.

The reporter makes an off-handed remark about food showing up for everyone inside. Darby is escorted by police and everything. The same female reporter that has been filling time tries to get a comment from the soon to be famous pizza delivery guy. It makes for a cute story—just a regular guy that is plucked out of obscurity to do something courageous.

There, standing between the parted crowd, is a complete stranger proudly holding the thermo pizza carriers in his arms as the SWAT team suits him up. My heart sinks. My body begins to convulse. Confused I look around. Darby is back standing by the front counter, flirting with the new girl that takes the calls. I ask him why the hell he's not at the bank delivering the pizzas. Darby looks at me and says that it was *Papa Michelina's Downtown* that filled that order. He then said with a laugh that they couldn't pay him enough to do what that dumb-shit is doing.

Looking back up to the television I see the lanky twenty-something unsteadily walking toward the bank doors. A long, greasy ponytail is hanging from the back of his recently placed helmet. He's taking baby steps the entire way as an unarmed, masked man carefully opens the door while quickly looking around.

Terrified, I ask Darby where his pizzas went. Darby said they were for some ten year old kid's birthday party in the city park.

Shaking, short of breath, I stumble back into the kitchen. Darby and the new girl are now giving me strange looks and asking if I'm alright.

It is imperative not to confirm your wife's accusations. Also it is just as important to take into consideration that a hostage negotiator and a mother hosting a pizza party for children will have similar, simple pizza requests.

Sometimes it's doesn't pay to be a hero.