

# CALZONES

Serves 4.

By Dennis W. Viau; modified from a recipe  
in a restaurant trade journal.

An Italian friend said these pastries are sometimes called *svuotafri*g, literally “refrigerator emptier” in Italy because they are made to economically use up leftovers. I made mine from scratch, including the dough, from fresh ingredients. The *calzones* were delicious.

## **Ingredients:**

### **For the Dough:**

10.2 ounces (289g) all-purpose flour (just over 2 cups)  
5.8 ounces (165g) water (almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup); see Note at end  
1 teaspoon yeast  
1 teaspoon sugar  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt

### **For the Calzones:**

2 tablespoons pure (not extra virgin) olive oil (for frying)  
2 Italian sausages (4 ounces/114g each), casings removed  
1 clove garlic, minced or crushed through a garlic press  
Optional: 2 anchovy fillets  
8 ounces (227g) ricotta cheese  
8 ounces (227g) mozzarella cheese, shredded  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (28g) grated Parmesan cheese  
2 ounces (57g) pepperoni slices, coarsely chopped  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon dried oregano (or Italian seasoning)  
Optional:  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon red pepper flakes  
1 pound (454g) bread dough or pizza dough (from above)  
Corn meal (for the pizza peel)  
2 cups (400g) marinara sauce (more as needed)

## **Directions:**

If possible, make the dough the evening before and let rise in the refrigerator overnight.

Combine all the dough ingredients and mix until dry enough to knead. Transfer to a clean surface and knead until smooth and elastic, about 5 minutes. Place the dough in a greased bowl, cover with plastic, and let rise in the refrigerator. If making the same day, let rise at room temperature until doubled in bulk, about an hour.

Spread the ricotta cheese on several layers of paper towels and press more paper towels on top to wick moisture out of the cheese. This can be done the evening before. Place the paper-towel wrapped cheese on a plate, cover with plastic wrap, and place in the refrigerator with the dough.

Heat the oven to 450°F (232°C) with a pizza stone, if available, on a middle rack.

Heat the oil in a skillet and sauté the sausage meat, breaking it up with a spatula, until thoroughly cooked and lightly browned. Add the garlic and (optional) anchovy fillets. Cook a minute longer, stirring to break up the fillets (if using). Push the meat to one side and tilt the pan and let any oil in the meat drain. Then transfer the meat to a mixing bowl.

Add the cheese, chopped pepperoni, and herbs. Mix well. Divide into 4 portions.



Punch down the dough and divide into 4 portions. While working with one portion, keep the others wrapped.

Shape each dough portion into a round flat disk 7 to 8 inches (18 to 20cm) in diameter. Place a portion of filling on the dough circle, arranging it toward one side but leaving room around the edges. Fold the uncovered half of the dough circle over the filling and press well around the edges to seal the pastry closed. Press with a fork the help seal the pastry. Cut vents in the top, large enough such that they won't close and seal as the dough expands in the oven. Continue with the remaining dough and filling, making four calzones.

Dust a pizza peel with corn meal and place the calzones, 2 at a time, on the peel. Slide the calzones onto the pizza stone, arranging to fit all four onto the stone. If you do not have a pizza stone, you can arrange the calzones on a baking sheet.

Bake about 20 minutes until the dough is golden brown. Note: You might see some leakage of the filling from the edges or out of the vents as it expands. Remove from the oven and cool slightly on a rack.

Heat the marinara sauce and spoon into individual serving bowls for dipping the calzones. Serve warm.

## STEP-BY-STEP

1



Combine the dough ingredients and mix until dry enough to knead. I didn't warm the water for this dough because I planned to let the dough rise slowly in the refrigerator overnight.

**2**

Knead the dough until smooth and elastic, about 5 minutes.

**3**

Place in a greased or oiled bowl and cover with plastic. Either let rise in the refrigerator or, for sooner use, let rise in a warm place until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour.

4



Heat the oil in a skillet and sauté the Italian sausage meat until lightly browned and thoroughly cooked. Add the minced garlic and sauté a minute longer.

5



While the sausage meat is cooking, chop the pepperoni slices.



6



Assemble the cooked meat, pepperoni, and cheeses. The mixture should be fairly dry. As I stated above in the procedure, I wicked water out of the ricotta cheese overnight by pressing it between layers of paper towels. The towels were so wet in the morning, I could wring water out of them. Some ricotta cheese has a lot of moisture in it. If liquid gathers in the bottom of the calzones while baking, it will ruin the pastry shell.

7



After the dough has had time to rise, punch it down and divide it into four pieces. You can press the filling into the bottom of the bowl and divide it into four sections as well.

8



Roll the dough into a flat circle and press some of the filling onto one side of it. Leave a border around the edge.

9



Pull the uncovered half of the dough over the filling and press the edges together to seal. Press well, as these calzones might split along the seam when baking.

10



You can stitch the seam together with the tines of a fork. If you prefer a cleaner look, you can trim the edge with a fluted pastry cutter.

11



Dust a pizza peel well with corn meal and place the calzones on top. Before putting them in the oven, cut steam vents into each. Bake for about 20 minutes until the pastry shell is a light golden brown.

I heated my oven with a pizza stone on a middle shelf and baked my calzones on the stone. The texture of the pastry shell should be tender, not crisp like the crust of fresh French bread. Also, a good Italian friend of mine said the outside is never coated with anything where she came from in Italy.

**12**

Allow the calzones to cool on a rack for a few minutes after coming out of the oven. They should be hot, but so hot that the melted cheese would spill out of them when biting into them or cutting with a knife. For serving, heat some marinara sauce in a saucepan and place in small dipping bowls for dinner guests to dip their calzone into when eating.

## Conclusion

These calzones were not difficult to make. It is important to measure the pastry ingredients accurately. It is also important to know how your flour responds in a dough. In some regions the flour can be a little different. Climate can also affect the dough. The proportions I used in my dough worked very well for me.

## Notes

The original recipe called for 1 pound (454g) of frozen pizza dough, thawed. I wanted to make my own dough from scratch. The challenge was to figure out the ratio of water and flour to end up with 1 pound of raw dough. My cooking textbooks—which measure these ingredients by weight, not by volume—said a good starting ration is 60/40. In other words, 60% of the final weight would be that of the flour, and 40% would be the weight of the water. Professional bakers often work in percentages of weights, not cups, even for the water because it is easier to multiply a recipe from 6 servings to 40 servings, or whatever is desired.

I prefer to work with weight when baking because it is more accurate and produces more reliable results.