



TWIP KITCHEN

# Palestinian Pizza

By Riyam Kafri AbuLaban

Friday mornings are usually punctuated with the smell of freshly made manae'esh or sweet cinnamon cupcakes, but our kitchen truly dances when we make pizza on some Friday afternoons. The clicking, clacking of pans and mixing bowls, with the few usual bams and crashes, is the perfect soundtrack to a busy kitchen. Cooking is the music of the home.

*In a food processor, combine 2 cups of flour (the Palestinian kind is perfect for this), 1 cup of whole-wheat flour, a dash of salt, a half-teaspoon of sugar, and 1 teaspoon of instant yeast. Gradually add ¾ cup of oil as you slowly mix the ingredients.*

During the war on Gaza, the music stopped. My cooking grew silent and lonely. There was no sneezing because of all the flour spilled, or laughter at the sight of cracked eggs, or painting with yogurt. I painfully made food alone without making an event that Basil and Taima could participate in. Cooking, for the first time, became a duty that I pursued quietly and shyly, knowing that in Gaza, kitchens had stopped dancing, that the smell of *shatta*, which usually permeates dishes, had been suspended until further notice. As I watched houses, apartments, and entire residential towers go down, my kitchen grew even more silent and more lonely, as if to honour all the lost family recipes, favourite spatulas, and

age-old mixing bowls passed on from one generation to the next.

*Gradually add warm water, checking the consistency of your dough. Keep adding until the dough is moist, elastic, but does not stick to your hands. (If it's a bit sticky, don't worry, you just don't want it to be a watery mess. You get the idea.) Let the dough stand for an hour to rise.*

In the process of mourning Gaza we collectively, yet individually in our households, restarted a conversation we had stopped having out loud during the past twenty years: boycotting Israeli products. Cooking, transformed from a daily chore to a national duty, was to become a treasure hunt centred on how to make your family's favourite dishes Israeli-product free. My kitchen regained its dancing, this time to the thumping sounds of revolution. I was no longer a mother of two, making pizza on a lazy Friday afternoon to keep her children busy, but a freedom fighter, a determined woman with a noble cause. I was liberating my kitchen and my cooking...

*In a saucepan, sauté one finely chopped red onion, add to it peeled and finely chopped extra red tomatoes. (These days I start my conversation with my vegetable man with, "Falasteeniyeh al-khudra?" More often than not the answer is a confident, honest yes.) Then sprinkle a teaspoon of allspice,*

*a teaspoon of dried basil, a teaspoon of dried oregano, and a teaspoon of dried cilantro (I doubt that any of us buy Israeli spices when they are so busy trying to steal all that makes our food ours. Spices are a cuisine's fingerprints.) Add 1 tablespoon tomato paste, 1 tablespoon ketchup, and half a cup of water, and leave the mixture to simmer on low heat for a while; 20–30 minutes should do.*

My kitchen these days feels like the centre of an Israeli-product boycott campaign as I constantly look for alternatives. Grocery shopping has become an act of resistance. And cooking is now an expression of freedom. Our cuisine has regained its Palestinian fingerprints (at least I hope it has) after systematic appropriation by Israeli foodies and tasteless occupation by Israeli products. Interestingly, even pizza, this Italian genius invention, can be made without Israeli products.

*Take half the dough and spread it into a large oven pan; use a little bit of oil to help spread the dough with your hands. Use as much sauce as you'd like, spread evenly. Add your toppings: mushrooms, green peppers, organic sun-dried tomatoes (for my gourmet daughter), olives (pit your own, don't buy the Israeli ones), grated cheese (there are several high-quality non-*

*Israeli varieties in the market today). Bake until done. It is delicious.*

The pizza recipe woven into this piece is a favourite in our household and everyone gets to help. A bite of it, hot and oozing, is a taste of Palestine – chopped, sautéed, baked, and Israeli-product free. Take a bite of freedom. Pizza has been liberated!

## Ingredients

2 cups white flour  
1 cup whole-wheat flour  
¾ cup vegetable oil  
1 cup water (approximately)  
1 small red onion  
3 medium extra-ripe tomatoes  
Salt to taste  
1 tsp. ketchup  
1 tsp. tomato paste  
1 tsp. all spice  
1 tsp. dried oregano  
1 tsp. dried cilantro  
1 tsp. basil (optional)  
2 cups grated mozzarella cheese (or to taste)

*Toppings: You can add any topping you'd like. For a vegetarian pizza, I like to add green peppers, red peppers, sundried tomatoes, red onions, mushrooms, sweet corn (optional), pitted green olives.*

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