GENERAL

what to cook in pizza oven

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What to Cook in a Pizza Oven: Unlocking the Full Potential of Your Pizza Hearth

When you first hear the word “pizza oven,” your mind usually jumps straight to a steaming, wood smoked pie with a perfectly blistered crust. But a pizza oven is far more than a pizza making machine. Its high temperature, radiant heat and even heat distribution make it an ideal appliance for a wide variety of dishes—from rustic breads to decadent desserts, from grilled meats to roasted vegetables. Whether you own a backyard wood fired oven, a sleek gas unit, or a countertop electric model, you can transform it into a versatile cooking station that elevates every meal.

In this guide we’ll explore the best foods to cook in a pizza oven, why they work so well, and how to get the most out of your appliance. From classic recipes to inventive twists, you’ll discover a menu of dishes that will impress friends and family alike—and make your pizza oven the centerpiece of your culinary adventures.

Why a Pizza Oven Is a Culinary Powerhouse

Before diving into recipes, it’s useful to understand what makes a pizza oven so special. The key factors are:

- High Temperatures – Pizza ovens routinely reach 700–900 /°F (370–480 /°C), which is higher than most conventional ovens. This allows for rapid cooking and creates a crisp crust while keeping the interior moist.
- Radiant Heat – Heat radiates from the walls and floor, cooking food evenly from all sides. This is especially beneficial for baked goods and grilled items.
- Even Heat Distribution – Unlike a standard oven that may have hot spots, a pizza oven’s design ensures consistent heat, which is crucial for delicate pastries and breads.
- Flavor Enhancement – Wood fired ovens impart a smoky, earthy flavor that can’t be replicated by electric or gas units. Even gas ovens provide a subtle, clean heat that’s ideal for many dishes.
- Versatility – With the right accessories—like pizza stones, baking sheets, and rotisserie attachments—you can use a pizza oven for almost anything that requires high heat.

Because of these attributes, dishes that benefit from quick, intense heat or even heat are particularly well suited to pizza ovens. Let’s explore the categories of foods you can cook.

Pizza: The Classic Choice

It goes without saying that pizza is the flagship dish for any pizza oven. But even within pizza, there are variations that take advantage of the oven’s strengths.

Traditional Neapolitan Pizza

Neapolitan pizza is a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, and it thrives in a wood fired oven at 800–900 °F. The dough, a simple mixture of flour, water, salt, and yeast, should rest for at least 24 hours. Use San Marzano tomatoes, fresh mozzarella, and a handful of basil leaves. Slide the pizza onto a preheated pizza stone or steel, and bake for 90–120 /seconds. The result is a blistered, chewy crust with a tender, airy interior.

New York Style Pizza

For a thicker, fold able slice, use a high gluten flour and a longer fermentation period. Bake at 700 °F on a steel. The

crust will be crisp on the outside and chewy on the inside. Add a generous layer of sauce, mozzarella, and your favorite toppings.

Flatbread and Artisan Pizzas

Thin crusts, focaccia, and pizza rolls also benefit from the oven's heat. Experiment with toppings like caramelized onions, goat cheese, and arugula. Because the oven cooks quickly, you can create a menu of small, shareable flatbreads for parties.

Breads: From Rustic Loaves to Sweet Treats

A pizza oven's high temperature and even heat are perfect for baking breads that require a crisp crust and a tender crumb. Below are some of the best bread options.

Stone Baked Sourdough

Sourdough bread is a labor of love, but the final bake is a joy. Prepare a sourdough starter, mix your dough, and let it rise for several hours. Preheat your pizza oven to 700 °F. Transfer the dough to a preheated pizza stone, score the top, and bake for 25–30 minutes. The crust will develop a beautiful golden color, while the interior remains airy and chewy.

Ciabatta

Ciabatta's porous structure requires a hot, dry environment for proper expansion. Bake at 650–700 °F on a pizza stone. Bake until the crust is golden and the loaf sounds hollow when tapped. The result is a crisp crust with a chewy interior.

Focaccia

Focaccia benefits from a high, even heat that creates a golden crust while keeping the dough soft. Spread olive oil over the dough, dot with herbs, and bake at 600–650 °F for 15–20 minutes. The result is a flavorful, fragrant bread perfect for dipping into olive oil or serving alongside a salad.

Sweet Bread: Cinnamon Rolls and Brioche

Sweet breads like cinnamon rolls and brioche thrive in a pizza oven. Bake at 600–650 °F until the tops are golden brown. The high heat caramelizes sugars quickly, giving the rolls a sweet crust with a soft interior.

Pizza Oven Cookies

Use a pizza stone to bake cookies. The even heat ensures a crisp edge and a chewy center. Try chocolate chip, oatmeal raisin, or shortbread. Bake at 500–550 /°F for 8–10 /minutes.

Grilled Meats: Juicy and Flavorful

High heat is ideal for searing meats, locking in juices, and creating a caramelized crust. The pizza oven's radiant heat can mimic a grill, making it an excellent choice for a variety of proteins.

Steak

Season a ribeye or New York strip with salt, pepper, and a touch of garlic powder. Preheat the oven to 800 °F. Place the steak directly on the pizza stone or a cast iron pan. Sear each side for 2–3 minutes, then finish at 450 °F for 5–7 /minutes for medium rare. The result is a beautifully seared crust and a tender, juicy center.

Chicken Thighs

Marinate chicken thighs in olive oil, lemon zest, rosemary, and garlic. Bake at 700 °F on a pizza stone for 25–30 /minutes, turning halfway through. The skin becomes crisp while the meat stays moist.

Fish Fillets

For a quick, healthy dinner, season salmon or cod fillets with salt, pepper, and a drizzle of olive oil. Bake at 650–700 /°F for 8–10 /minutes. The high heat cooks the fish quickly, preventing it from drying out.

Vegetarian Skewers

Thread bell peppers, zucchini, mushrooms, and cherry tomatoes onto skewers. Brush with olive oil and season. Grill in the pizza oven at 700 °F for 8–10 minutes, turning occasionally. The vegetables develop a charred flavor reminiscent of a campfire grill.

Roasted Vegetables: Smoky, Caramelized Goodness

Roasting vegetables in a pizza oven gives them a smoky flavor that's hard to replicate in a conventional oven.

Root Vegetables

Cut carrots, potatoes, parsnips, and beets into uniform pieces. Toss with olive oil, salt, pepper, and herbs. Roast at 700 /°F for 20–25 /minutes, turning halfway. The high heat caramelizes the natural sugars, resulting in a sweet, savory side dish.

Brussels Sprouts

Halve Brussels sprouts, toss with olive oil, salt, and pepper. Roast at 650–700 /°F for 15–20 /minutes, shaking the pan halfway through. The sprouts develop a crisp exterior and a tender interior.

Squash and Corn

Slice butternut squash into thin wedges, toss with olive oil, salt, and paprika. Roast at 700 °F for 15–20 minutes. For corn, brush with butter and sprinkle with chili powder, then roast at 700 /°F for 8–10 /minutes.

Pizza Oven Desserts: Sweet and Savory Treats

High heat is not just for savory dishes. Desserts baked in a pizza oven can develop caramelized tops and a moist interior.

Chocolate Lava Cake

Use a small cast iron skillet or ramekin. Preheat the oven to 650 °F. Place the skillet on the pizza stone and bake for 12–14 /minutes. The cake will set on the outside while the center remains molten.

Apple Galette

Prepare a simple pastry crust, fill with sliced apples, cinnamon, and a splash of lemon juice. Bake at 600–650 °F for 20–25 /minutes. The crust becomes flaky and golden, while the apples soften and caramelize.

Cheesecake on a Stone

Pour the cheesecake batter into a preheated pizza stone. Bake at 550–600 /°F for 30–35 /minutes. The high heat sets the top quickly, creating a creamy center.

Pizza Oven Soups and Stews: Slow Cooked Perfection

While pizza ovens are known for quick, high heat cooking, they can also be used for slow cooking dishes if you

control the temperature.

Shallow Pot Stew

Use a shallow, oven safe pan. Brown meat on the stove, then transfer to the oven at 300–350 /°F. Cook for 1–2 /hours, adding broth, vegetables, and seasonings as needed. The slow heat allows flavors to meld, while the high walls of the oven help retain moisture.

Tomato Basil Soup

Simmer tomatoes, garlic, onions, and basil on the stovetop. Transfer to a shallow pan, cover, and bake at 400 °F for 30 /minutes. The oven's radiant heat gives the soup a slightly caramelized flavor.

Pizza Oven Marinades and Brines: Enhancing Flavor

Use the pizza oven to prepare marinades or brines that add depth to meats and vegetables.

Garlic Herb Marinade

Combine olive oil, minced garlic, rosemary, thyme, salt, and pepper. Warm in the oven at 250 /°F for 10 /minutes, then let cool. Marinate chicken or beef for at least 2 /hours.

Apple Cider Brine

Heat apple cider, salt, pepper, bay leaves, and cloves in a saucepan until the salt dissolves. Cool and pour over pork or poultry. Store in the refrigerator for 24 /hours before cooking.

Pizza Oven Accessories: Making the Most of Your Appliance

While a pizza oven is versatile, the right accessories can expand its capabilities even further.

- Pizza Stone or Steel – Provides a hot surface that evenly distributes heat to dough and other foods.
- Baking Sheets – Useful for cookies, pastries, and roasting vegetables.
- Rotisserie Attachment – Allows you to cook poultry or small roasts evenly.
- Pizza Peel – Essential for sliding pizzas in and out of the oven.
- Thermometer – Helps maintain precise temperatures, especially for delicate baked goods.

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