***Homemade Margherita Pizza***

*Yield:* **TWO 10-INCH PIZZAS**

Ingredients:

Homemade Pizza Dough:

* 2.5 cups (300 grams) unbleached all-purpose flour
* 1 teaspoon granulated sugar
* 1/2 teaspoon active dry yeast
* 3/4 teaspoon sea salt
* Slightly less than 1 cup warm water (105 degrees F - 115 degrees F)
* 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
* 2 tablespoons cornmeal, for the pizza peel

Pizza Toppings:

* 1 cup San Marzano pureed canned tomatoes
* 2 medium fresh garlic cloves (minced with a garlic press)
* 1 teaspoon extra virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
* 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
* two large pinches of sea salt
* 2 - 3 tablespoons finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, plus more for serving
* 8 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
* 5 - 6 large fresh basil leaves, plus more for garnishing
* crushed dried red pepper flakes (optional)

Directions:

1. **Prepare Pizza Dough:**In a medium bowl, whisk together the all-purpose flour, sugar, yeast and salt. Add the warm water and olive oil, and stir the mixture with a wooden spoon until the dough just begins to come together. Place the dough on a well-floured surface and knead it for three minutes, or until it is smooth and slightly elastic. Lightly grease a medium bowl with olive oil, and place the dough into the bowl, cover the bowl with a kitchen towel, and allow the pizza dough to rise at room temperature for 2 hours or until double in size.

**Day 2:**

1. **Preheat Oven:**Place the pizza stone on the center rack of your oven, and preheat the oven to 550 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Once the dough has risen, separate it into two equal-sized portions. In a small bowl, stir together the tomatoes, minced garlic, extra virgin olive oil, pepper, and salt. Set aside another small bowl with the cubed mozzarella cheese (pat the cheese with a paper towel to remove any excess moisture). Set aside the basil leaves and grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese for easy grabbing.
3. **Assemble the Pizza:**Sprinkle the pizza peel (alternatively, you can use the back of a baking sheet) with a tablespoon of cornmeal. On a lightly floured surface, gently stretch one ball of pizza dough into roughly a 10-inch circle. The edges of the dough can be slightly thicker, but make sure the center of the dough is very thin (you should be able to see light through it when you hold it up). Gently transfer the dough onto the cornmeal-dusted baking sheet.
4. Drizzle the dough lightly with olive oil (teaspoon or so). Using a large spoon, add roughly 1/2 cup of the tomato sauce onto the pizza dough, leaving a 1/2-inch or 3/4-inch border on all sides. Use the back of the spoon to spread it evenly and thinly. Sprinkle a tablespoon of Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese onto the pizza sauce. Add half of the cubed mozzarella, distributing it evenly over the entire pizza. Using your hands, tear a few large basil leaves, and sprinkle the basil over the pizza. Bake for 7 to 8 minutes, or until the crust is golden and the cheese is bubbling and just beginning to caramelize. Serve immediately. Repeat with the remaining pizza dough.