Authentic Sfincione Palermitano – Sicilian Pizza

Sfincione is Palermo's beloved thick, fluffy Sicilian pizza. Its tender, focaccia-like crust is covered with slow-cooked onions and tomatoes, savory anchovies, cheese, oregano, and golden breadcrumbs. Cut into squares and serve warm or at room temperature, just like a Sicilian street-food favorite.

- **Preparation time:** 35 minutes
- **Rising time:** 2 hours 15 minutes (approximately)
- **Cooking time:** 30 minutes
- **Resting time:** 10 minutes
- **Total time:** 3 hours 30 minutes (approximately)
- **Servings:** 8 slices

Ingredients

For the dough

- 4 cups (500 g) all-purpose flour, plus a little for handling
- 1 packet (7 g) active dry yeast
- 1½ cups (350 ml) warm water, about 100–110°F (38–43°C)
- 1 teaspoon (4 g) sugar
- 1¾ teaspoons (10 g) fine salt
- 3 tablespoons (45 ml) extra-virgin olive oil

For the topping

- 2 large yellow onions (about 300 g), thinly sliced
- 4 tablespoons (60 ml) extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 can (28 oz / 800 g) peeled tomatoes, crushed
- 6 anchovy fillets in oil, finely chopped
- ½ cup (50 g) finely grated caciocavallo or Pecorino Romano
- 1 cup (100 g) plain dry breadcrumbs
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- Freshly ground black pepper and salt, to taste

Instructions

1. Activate the yeast. Mix the yeast and sugar into the warm water. Let stand 5–10 minutes, until creamy or foamy. If using instant yeast, mix it directly with the flour instead.

2. Make the dough. Combine flour and salt in a large bowl. Add the yeast mixture and 3 tablespoons olive oil. Mix until a soft, sticky dough forms; knead 8–10 minutes until elastic. Avoid adding much extra flour: the high-moisture dough is what makes sfincione fluffy.

3. First rise. Cover the lightly oiled dough and let rise in a warm, draft-free spot for about 90 minutes, or until doubled. Rising times vary with room temperature.

4. Prepare the onion-tomato sauce. While the dough rises, warm 2 tablespoons olive oil in a skillet. Add onions and cook gently for 12–15 minutes until softened. Stir in the anchovies until they dissolve, then add tomatoes, black pepper, and some oregano. Simmer uncovered 20–25 minutes until thick, then cool. Taste before adding salt: anchovies and cheese are already salty.

5. Toast the breadcrumbs. Toast breadcrumbs in the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium-low heat, stirring for 3–5 minutes until light gold. Remove from the heat; they will toast further in the oven.

6. Shape in the pan. Lightly oil a 13 x 18-inch (33 x 46 cm) rimmed baking pan. Gently stretch the risen dough into the pan with oiled fingertips, without pressing out all the air. If it springs back, rest for 10 minutes and continue stretching.

7. Second rise. Cover loosely and let rise for about 45 minutes, until noticeably puffy. Meanwhile preheat the oven to 425°F (220°C).

8. Add toppings and bake. Scatter the cheese over the dough, gently pressing some into the surface. Spoon on the cooled onion-tomato sauce, then sprinkle with toasted breadcrumbs and the remaining oregano. Bake on the lower-middle oven rack for about 25–30 minutes, until the underside is cooked through and the edges are golden. If browning too quickly, reduce the temperature slightly.

9. Rest and serve. Let stand 10 minutes before cutting into 8 generous squares. Enjoy warm or at room temperature.

Nonna's Tips

Pan size: A 13 x 18-inch (33 x 46 cm) rimmed pan makes a medium-thick sfincione. Use a smaller pan for a taller crust, allowing extra bake time.

Cheese: Caciocavallo is traditional; Pecorino Romano offers a sharper, saltier alternative. Do not use both at full quantity unless you prefer a salty topping.

Make ahead: Store cooled squares in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. Reheat in a 350°F (175°C) oven until hot.

Nutrition: Approximate per 1 of 8 large slices. Values vary by brands, tomato moisture, how much oil remains in the pan, and portion size.

Estimated Nutrition Per Slice

Nutrient	Amount
Calories	~445 kcal
Carbohydrates	~65 g
Protein	~12 g
Total fat	~16 g
Saturated fat	~3 g
Fiber	~5 g
Sodium	~900 mg