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– Chapter 6 –

Dough and Crust Troubleshooting

In most pizzerias, dough and crust problems exceed all other product problems combined. Prior chapters provide procedures for avoiding these problems. However an occasional problem might still occur and if it does this chapter can serve as a trouble-shooting reference guide.

How to Use This Chapter

Each problem is listed as a heading. Under each heading is a description of possible causes and remedies for the problem. *The most likely causes are listed first.* In addition some sections contain a discussion to aid understanding.

Although this chapter explains what to do, for a complete understanding of *how* and *why* something works you should refer to prior chapters on Dough Ingredients, Dough-making, and Dough Management. Using recommended procedures will go a long way to helping you avoid problems in the first place.

Additional Help

This chapter covers about 99 percent of the dough/crust problems occurring in pizzerias. However, if you have a problem not listed here, you might try:

- A baking reference book such as *The Bakeshop Trouble Shooter* by A. J. Vander Voort.
- Your flour or yeast company's technical representative or field consultant. Check the product package for a phone number.

- The American Institute of Baking, 1213 Bakers Way, Manhattan, KS, 66502. (913) 537-4750 or 800-633-5137.

Dough too stiff or too firm

~ Also see a subsequent section on **Dough Too Elastic or Springy** ~

POSSIBLE CAUSES

REMEDY

Too little water or too much flour	For subsequent batches, check recipe amounts and <i>weigh ingredients carefully</i> . If the problem is detected during mixing, add slightly more water and mix until just absorbed. (See Comment below.)
Dough (balls) too cold	Warm dough (balls) to 50 to 60 degrees F before using.
Dough unrelaxed	If feasible, flatten the dough balls 2 to 3 minutes before stretching or screening.
Inadequate fermentation	Increase fermentation or rise. See subsequent section on Under-risen Dough Balls .
Dough under-mixed	Mix (knead) slightly longer. Read the Mixing section in the Dough-making chapter.

COMMENT: This problem is hard to correct for the current batch unless it's discovered in the early stages of mixing. It's also more difficult to remedy with a cutter-mixer than with a planetary mixer because a cutter-mixer is hard to re-start with dough in it. If the problem can't be corrected by adding water, re-mix small pieces of the stiff dough into batches of new dough. Don't exceed 25 percent re-mixed dough per batch. Add it on top of the flour. Increase the water portion of the new batches enough to compensate for the under-portion of water in the stiff dough. If that's too difficult to do, discard the stiff dough.

Dough too slack or too soft

~ Also see a subsequent section on **Dough Too Extensible or Spreadable** ~

POSSIBLE CAUSES

REMEDY

Too much water or too little flour For subsequent batches, check recipe amounts and *weigh ingredients carefully*. If the problem is detected immediately after mixing, add slightly more flour and keep mixing. If this can't be done, re-mix small pieces of the slack dough into batches of new dough. Try to add only 10 percent slack dough per batch, but up to 25 percent can work. Add it during the last minute of mixing. Decrease the water portion of the new batch enough to compensate for the over-portion of water in the slack dough.

Dough (balls) too warm Refrigerate dough (balls) down to 40 degrees F before using.

Excessive fermentation Reduce fermentation or rise. See section on **Over-risen Dough Balls**.

Dough over-mixed If not severely over-mixed, mix small pieces into new dough (as described above). If dough is severely over-mixed, discard it. For subsequent batches, use a timer when mixing. Read the Mixing section in the Dough-making chapter.

Dough balls not rising at all (unrisen or dead dough)

POSSIBLE CAUSES

REMEDY

No yeast Include yeast in subsequent batches.

Old (dead) yeast Discard old (dead) yeast and use new yeast. Store yeast properly. (Read directions on package or read about proper storage methods in the Yeast section of the Dough Ingredients chapter).

Yeast water too hot, so yeast died Keep yeast water temperature under 115 degrees F. (Read directions on package or read the Yeast section of the Dough Ingredients chapter.)

Under-risen dough balls, or dough balls rising too slowly

POSSIBLE CAUSES	REMEDY
Partially dead (old) yeast	Discard old yeast and use new yeast. Store yeast properly. (Read directions on package or read about proper storage methods in the Yeast section of the Dough Ingredients chapter.)
Yeast improperly rehydrated	Rehydrate yeast in water of proper temperature. (Read directions on package or read about proper hydration methods in the Yeast section of the Dough Ingredients chapter.)
Not enough yeast	Increase yeast portion. For subsequent batches, check recipe amounts and <i>weigh ingredients carefully</i> .
Dough too cold coming from mixer	Increase dough water temperature so dough comes from mixer at higher temperature. Read the Mixing section of the Dough-making chapter.
Dough stored at too low of a temperature	Raise the temperature of the refrigerator (retarder) a few degrees but not over 40 degrees F. Or, if that's not possible, let the dough balls sit at room temperature or put them into a proofer before using. For more specifics, read the chapter on Dough Management.
Yeast rehydration water too cold	Raise the rehydration water temperature to that specified by the manufacturer (see instructions on the yeast carton).
Inadequate fermentation time	Make dough farther ahead of usage; allow more time for fermentation or rising.

COMMENT: In addition to the causes cited above, amount of rise can be affected by salt, sugar, acidity, water, and yeast nutrients in the dough, and also by the composition of the flour. For a complete discussion, read the Yeast section of the Dough Ingredients chapter.

Over-risen dough balls, or dough balls rising too quickly

POSSIBLE CAUSES	REMEDY
Too much yeast	Reduce yeast portion. For subsequent batches, check recipe amounts and <i>weigh ingredients carefully</i> .
Dough too warm coming from mixer	Decrease dough water temperature so dough comes from mixer at lower temperature. Read the Mixing section of the Dough-making chapter..
Dough stored at too high of a temperature	Criss-cross trays of dough for 60 to 90 minutes when first put into refrigerator. Don't let dough sit (as long) at room temperature. Keep refrigerator temperature low. For more specifics, read the Dough Management chapter.
Dough mixed too far ahead; too much fermentation time	Mix dough closer to when it will be used. Project sales and correlate dough ball production to projected usage.

COMMENT: In addition to the causes cited above, amount of rise can be affected by salt, sugar, acidity, water, and yeast nutrients in the dough, and also by the characteristics of the flour. For a complete discussion, read the Yeast section of the Dough Ingredients chapter.

Dough balls joining together in the dough tray

POSSIBLE CAUSES	REMEDY
Over-risen dough	Reduce amount of rise in the dough. See previous section on Over-risen Dough Balls .
Poor dough ball placement	When placing dough balls in the tray, position them so balls are the same distance apart — or 1-1/2 to 2 inches.
Too many balls in tray	Reduce number of dough balls per tray.