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Stickeler's Answer Stickelers Answer

9	A = 9
1955	E = 7
1955	I = 8
+ 1957	L = 5
5876	S = 6
	T = 1

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Crazy for Calzones

by ANGELA SHELF MEDEARIS

America has had a love affair with Italian food, especially calzones, for decades. The word calzone translates as "pant leg" or "trouser." The original calzoni (plural of calzone) that were created in 18th-century Naples, Italy, were probably much smaller than ones served today in American restaurants. The Italian calzone's half-moon shape indicates that they were probably made with a single, small round pizza crust that was filled with toppings, folded over, sealed and then baked.

Italian calzones often were sold by street vendors and designed to be a portable, walk-around pizza that could be eaten without utensils. Traditional ingredients include salted bread dough, ricotta, mozzarella, Parmesan or pecorino cheeses, and ham or salami; however, variations appear from region to region in Italy.

When baked correctly, the calzone's outer crust is golden-brown and crispy, while the inside filling melts into a flavorful blend of ricotta and mozzarella cheeses combined with an assortment of Italian meats and vegetables. After baking, calzones usually are sprinkled with a blend of garlic, olive oil and parsley, and served with a side of marinara sauce for dipping.

Calzones sometimes are confused with other Italian creations like panzarrotti, or stromboli. A panzarrotti resembles a small calzone and is stuffed with a combination of tomatoes and mozzarella, then fried. The stromboli is an American invention that was created in the 1950s. It usually is filled with a blend of Italian cheeses, Italian meats and a tomato-based marinara sauce that are layered on a sheet of pizza dough, which is then rolled up into a rectangle. The stromboli is either finished in the oven or deep-fried.

Modern calzones grew in popularity after a reference in the TV series "Seinfeld" in 1996, and more recently, in the hit series "Parks and Recreation" in 2014.

It's no surprise that television has had a large part in spreading the crazy demand for calzones. It's the perfect crispy, cheesy, hand-held snack to enjoy while watching your favorite show!



Photo credit: Deposit Photos

MEDITERRANEAN CALZONES

I love this Mediterranean-flavored, vegetarian version of the traditional Italian calzone. You can buy refrigerated pizza dough at a grocery store (like Safeway or Trader Joe's) or purchase it from your favorite pizza delivery store.

- 1/2 cup yellow cornmeal
- 2 (16-ounce) plain or whole-wheat refrigerated pizza dough balls
- 2 cups ricotta cheese (whole milk or low-fat works)
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 1/2 cup roughly chopped canned artichoke hearts in water, drained
- 1/2 cup chopped, fire-roasted red peppers
- 1/3 cup halved Kalamata olives
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/2 cup marinara pizza sauce (plus 3/4 cup more for serving)
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced
- 1/4 cup chopped parsley

1. Heat oven to 450 F. Lightly oil two large, rimmed baking sheets. Sprinkle each pan with the cornmeal. Set aside.

2. Cut each ball of pizza dough into equal thirds and set aside.

3. In a medium bowl, mix together the ricotta, mozzarella and feta cheese. In a separate bowl, combine the vegetables and divide into 6 portions. Place a ball of the dough onto a lightly floured board or pastry mat. Sprinkle the top of the dough portions with 1 or 2 teaspoons of additional flour to prevent sticking.

4. Use your fingers to first stretch the dough, and then roll it with a floured rolling pin into an 8-inch circle. If the dough shrinks back after rolling, let it rest for 5 minutes and try again.

5. Sprinkle one portion of the artichoke pieces, roasted red peppers and olive filling on the bottom half of the dough circle, leaving about a 1-inch border between the filling and the edge.

6. Place 1/3 cup of the cheese filling on the veggies. Drizzle 1 1/2 tablespoons of the pizza sauce on top of the cheese.

7. Dip your fingers in a bowl of water and wet the edges of the bottom half of the calzone. Fold the top half over the fillings to form a half-moon shape. Press the edges firmly together to seal the calzone and then roll the edges to form a better seal, or press the tines of a fork into the edges to seal the calzone.

8. Carefully transfer the calzone to a baking sheet and repeat steps to assemble the remaining calzones. Place three calzones on each baking sheet. Use a sharp knife to slice a 2-inch slit into the tops of each one. This allows the steam to escape and helps prevent the filling from seeping out.

9. Bake about 10-12 minutes until the calzones are golden brown. Allow the calzones to cool for about 5 minutes before serving. Sprinkle with some of the olive oil, garlic and parsley, and serve with additional pizza sauce for dipping. Makes 6 servings.

Angela Shelf Medearis is an award-winning children's author, culinary historian and the author of seven cookbooks. Her new cookbook is "The Kitchen Diva's Diabetic Cookbook." Her website is www.divapro.com. To see how-to videos, recipes and much, much more, Like Angela Shelf Medearis, The Kitchen Diva! on Facebook. Recipes may not be reprinted without permission from Angela Shelf Medearis.

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