

Italian Bread - Herb Focaccia



A delicious herbed Italian flatbread known as focaccia. It is a good accompaniment to soups, salads, houmous, or on its own. After dhur prayer, we enjoyed lunch together- ladies and children sampling the freshly baked bread.

Makes two 13" x 9" flat loaves or 3 pizza rounds.
Suitable for home freezing.

Ingredients (imperial measurements)

- 2 packets active dry yeast (or 4 teaspoons of normal yeast)
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 2 cups warm water (1 cup boiling mixed with 1 cup normal tap water)
- 2-3 Tablespoons dried or fresh herbs: oregano, thyme, or rosemary
- 1.5 Tablespoons salt
- 4 1/2 to 5 cups Strong White Bread Flour
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- extra olive oil for topping
- freshly ground black pepper

Method

1. In a large bowl, put in 4.5 cups of flour. Mix in salt and herbs.
2. In a separate bowl, put in warm water. Add in sugar. Mix in normal yeast with a spoon. Allow this to stand for 5-10 minutes until a thick froth is seen on top.
3. Stir olive oil into yeast/water mixture.
4. Pour wet ingredients into dry ingredients, stir with a spoon until you get a soft dough. Start using your hands to bring all of the flour in and form a dough. If needed, add in the remaining 1/2 cup of flour gradually. Dough should be easy to handle.
5. On a lightly floured surface, knead dough for 10 minutes (it can be a shorter time, but kneading it makes it softer)
6. Allow the dough to rest for 5 minutes before rolling out to fit your pans.
7. Oil the baking pans lightly. You can sprinkle cornmeal in the pan bottom for a "rustic" bread



8. Roll out dough to fit pans. Dough should be less than one-half inch in height (remember that this is a flattish bread). Place dough in pans. Cover the dough with a damp cloth, let it rise for 20 minutes in a warm place.

9. Preheat oven to 230 C/450 F/ gas mark 8



10. With lightly oiled fingertips, make indentations in the dough, 1/2 inch deep and 1 inch apart all over the dough. Sprinkle dough tops with fresh pepper. Drizzle olive oil over dough.



11. Bake in the oven until golden, which varies from 10-12 minutes depending on the oven. Remove the bread from the pan right away and cool on a wire rack (so that condensation doesn't make the bread soggy on the bottom.)