



## FOCACCIA

[ how to make your own ]

Flour 500g      Warm Water 386g  
 Instant Yeast 6g      Salt 12g  
 EV Olive Oil 64g + some extra  
 Fresh Rosemary (chopped)  
 Flaky Sea Salt (for the top)

- Put the warm water into a small bowl and sprinkle the yeast over the top. Put it aside to allow the yeast to activate, approx 15 minutes.
- Put the flour in a small plastic bowl and make a well in the centre.
- Pour the activated yeast mixture into the well and mix everything together till well combined, scrape down the sides and cover with plastic. Put the bowl aside for 30 minutes. Then, using your hand, mix/scrunch in the olive oil bit by bit and then the salt.
- Tip the dough out onto a clean bench, clean the bowl and lightly oil it. Put it aside.
- Knead the dough for at least 5 to 6 minutes. The dough will be a little sloppy at first but it will begin to come together quickly.
- When the dough is sufficiently developed (begins to look glossy) put it into the oiled bowl, cover it with plastic and put it aside for 20 minutes. Gently stretch and fold the dough from each of the four corners (while in the bowl) and let the dough ferment and rise till doubled for a final 30 minutes to 1 hour.
- Lightly oil a baking sheet and cover it with baking paper. Lightly oil the paper then carefully tip the dough out onto it. Lightly brush the dough with more olive oil, then, using your fingers, gently ease the dough out into a rectangular or rounded shape of even thickness of about 1.5cm on the paper. (Rest the dough for a few minutes if it gets too elastic to spread, then continue).
- Sprinkle the surface with rosemary then cover and allow to rest for a further 1 hour.
- Heat your oven to 230°C, put the shelf in the middle of the lower half of the oven and place a baking sheet on it.
- Just before the bread goes into the oven sprinkle some additional olive oil over the top, dimple it with your fingers and sprinkle with some flaky sea salt.
- Bake the Focaccia for 20 minutes, or till it is nicely browned, turning the tray half way through baking to ensure even baking.

### A quick introduction to bread, and making Focaccia, with expert baker and tutor KEITH PASLEY of Heron Hill

**E**VER SINCE THE DAYS WHEN CRUDE FLATBREADS WERE BAKED OVER THE NEOLITHIC FIRE WE HAVE INCLUDED BREAD AS A SIGNIFICANT PART OF OUR DIET.

Neolithic flatbreads were unleavened and would have needed to be eaten straight from the fire, while still soft-ish!

It wasn't until around 1500BC, when the Egyptians began to use beer, instead of water, that the connection was made between the fermentation of grain, and bread was made.

Similarly, others outside of Egypt also began to make this connection; the Greeks and Italians used methods relating to the winemaking process to create fermentation in their bread. Apparently, the three most popular methods of fermentation were millet and grape juice, bran and white wine, and porridge.

Eventually the most common method was to retain a portion of fermented dough from one batch of bread to be added to the next batch – a technique still used today.

It wasn't until the late 1800s that yeast was commercially produced and increasingly relied upon over the perpetuated natural starters or sourdough cultures as we now know them.

This development, along with the mechanisation of the baking process, provided not only faster production but also vast quantities of commercially produced bread.

Accordingly, small 'artisan' bakeries began to decline as the efficiencies and cost-cutting measures of these large bakeries became established.

Although the loaf that was (and still is) produced was soft, of full volume and with a tight white crumb, because of the excessive mechanisation and excessive use of emulsifiers and stabilisers that give the bread long shelf life, the flavours and qualities of good bread produced by the smaller bakeries (using longer, slower methods) were gone. Quality bread of this nature was difficult to find.

Since the 1970s or so there has been a worldwide resurgence of interest in the techniques and processes that produce quality bread with a good crust, crumb and plenty of character. Thankfully, there are some excellent bakers and bakeries here in New Zealand – so seek them out and support them.

NorthTec's Whangarei campus is allowing me to use their commercial kitchen to present a series of three Bread Making Lessons.

Each of the first two lessons is a 6-7 hour, hands-on introduction into the methods and techniques of making bread, using (1) Commercial Yeast and (2) Sourdough Culture – my own, of which all participants will receive a portion.

The third lesson is aimed at the person who has completed either or both of the first two lessons (or already has some knowledge) and wants to learn some slightly more advanced techniques.

Please make contact with me, Keith, at [info@heronhill.co.nz](mailto:info@heronhill.co.nz) (09 401 7047) for more information about these Sept/Oct lessons. ■



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