

Focaccia

I looked around the Internet for a sourdough focaccia recipe, but couldn't find one that was satisfactory. They all used cups and tablespoons that don't translate well to other countries.

In the end, I found a yeast-based one at Wild Yeast (<http://www.wildyeastblog.com/focaccia>) – an interesting place to find it – that I converted to sourdough (and metric). Most of the focaccia recipes I found seemed to be about 80% hydration, and this one looked right.

I adjusted the ingredients to produce three sizes – small, medium and large.

Equipment:

- Baking pan approximately 250 x 380 mm for the large size and about 250 x 200 mm for the small size. The medium one will need something in between or just use the large one. The pans need sides about 15 to 20 mm high.
- Soft plastic bowl scraper.
- Baking paper
- Baking dish to place in the bottom of the oven for steam.

The Polish:

The polish (or sponge) is a 100% hydrated, pre-ferment stage that improves the taste and texture of the final product. It is usually prepared about 12 hours in advance. This recipe will create more polish than required in the recipe.

Ingredients and method:

Ingredient	Small	Medium	Large
White unbleached baker's flour	50 g	75 g	100g
Water	50 g	75 g	100 g
Starter (100% hydrated)	2 teaspoons	3 teaspoons	4 teaspoons

1. In a medium-sized bowl (about 2 L), add the water and starter (the amount of starter isn't particularly critical). Mix, so that the starter is evenly distributed.
2. Add the flour and mix thoroughly.
3. Cover and let stand overnight.

The focaccia:

Ingredients:

Ingredient	Small	Medium	Large
Poolish	100 g	150 g	200 g
White unbleached baker's flour	200 g	300 g	400 g
Water	150 g	225 g	300 g
Salt	5 g ($\frac{3}{4}$ tsp)	7 g (1 tsp)	10 g ($1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp)
Olive oil	12 g	19 g	25 g

Topping:

- Fresh rosemary leaves, or other herb(s) of your choice.
- Sliced tomatoes.
- Anything else you have loose – garlic, onions, coarse salt ...

Method:

1. In a large bowl add the poolish and the water. Mix thoroughly until the poolish is evenly distributed.
2. Add the olive oil and mix thoroughly.
3. Add the flour and salt and mix thoroughly. It will form a sticky dough. Use a soft plastic scraper to form the dough into a ball in the bowl. Cover and allow the dough to rest for 15 minutes.
4. After 15 minutes, knead the dough in the bowl using the soft plastic scraper. To do this pick up one side of the dough ball with the scraper and pull it across the ball. Turn the bowl slightly and repeat. Keep doing this for about 4 minutes. The gluten should start developing and the dough should start offering some resistance. The dough will be very soft and sticky, don't be tempted to add more flour.
5. Cover the bowl and allow the dough to rest for about 15 minutes.
6. After 15 minutes, knead the dough again for about 4 minutes.
7. If you think it needs more kneading, repeat steps 5 and 6.
8. When you are happy with the condition of the dough, let it stand until the dough has doubled in size (at least). This might take 3 to 6 hours.

9. While the dough is rising, prepare the tray to receive the dough. Either oil the tray thoroughly with olive oil or line the base of the tray with baking paper and oil that thoroughly.
10. When the dough has risen, pour the dough into the tray. Be very gentle with the dough, taking care not to degas it. Very gently spread the dough, with oiled fingers, evenly over the tray. It should be about 2 cm thick.
11. Dimple the dough by pressing into it firmly with oiled fingertips until they feel the pan.
12. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 200°C. You will need steam during the initial phase of baking, so place an empty baking tray in the bottom of the oven.
13. Before baking, brush the dough gently with olive oil, taking care not to degas it. Gently add the toppings.
14. Place the tray with the focaccia in the oven and add about half a cup of hot water to the steaming tray at the bottom of the oven.
15. Bake for 25 minutes, until the focaccia is golden brown.
16. Remove immediately from the pan, brush again with olive oil, and cool on a wire rack.