

Focaccia bread with rosemary

Every so often now I catch myself making a comment about just about any yeast-based dough recipes and saying, “ach I can do that”. I say catch myself because as regular readers here will know, there was a time when making bread seemed like some sort of magical, dark art to me. You can actually [read more about my journey](#) of learning to make bread here if you missed it, but what I actually, learned, is that making bread is really simple and just takes a wee bit of practice to get the hang of how things should look and feel. So with that in mind, and the fact that today is our wedding anniversary, I am finally making a bread that I always wanted to try but thought it was just too complicated, so I never did. Then I forgot all about it.

For anniversary, valentine etc dinners, we tend to go Italian, usually making fresh pasta and treat ourselves to a lovely creamy, luxurious sauce. Again, if you fancy joining us and learning just how easy it is to make your own fresh pasta at home, [have a read](#). So for tonight, not only are we treating ourselves to some lovely homemade pappardelle in a creamy marsala sauce, but I am also making focaccia.

Ingredients

- 500g bread flour
- 2 tsp salt
- 15g dried yeast
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- around 350ml water (you may not need it all)
- olive oil, for drizzling
- sea salt flakes
- Rosemary

Method

Add the flour, salt, yeast, olive oil and half of the water into a large bowl and start bringing it together with your hand. It will be sticky, so don't worry, it's meant to be. If you are a bit worried about working with a sticky dough, you can always use a stand mixer if you have one. As you mix the dough, gradually add the rest of the water until you have a soft, slightly sticky dough.

With a wet dough like this, it's much easier to get it going in the bowl rather than on a worktop where it will stick and make life hard, so for the first 5 or so minutes, stretch the dough around in the bowl, pull it and then tuck it back into the centre, turn the bowl a quarter turn and then 180 degrees repeat, keep doing this for about 5 minutes. (If you are using a mixer, then let the mixer take the strain and leave it to knead for about 10 minutes).

Tip the dough out onto an oiled worktop and keep kneading for another five minutes. If you are unsure about kneading, well, of course, have a helpful video on youtube:

Once you are happy that you have a pillow soft, lovely dough, oil the bowl and put the dough back into it, cover with clingfilm and leave to rise until doubled in size. This can take as little as half an hour or a whole lot longer depending on the room temperature.

Once the dough has doubled in size, oil two large baking sheets and then tip the dough out of the bowl and divide into two. Flatten each portion onto a baking sheet, making sure to push into the corners, then leave to prove for another half hour.

Meanwhile, get the oven preheated to 230C. Drizzle both "loaves" with olive oil and sprinkle with rosemary and fine sea salt then bake in the oven for 10 minutes. Then turn the

temperature down to 200C and keep baking for a further 10 minutes

When cooked, drizzle with a little more olive oil and serve warm.

