

Vegan Monday: Focaccia With Basil And Olive Oil

Ingredients:

Difficulty: Medium

(makes 1 bread in 25x35cm oven dish, but you can make it directly on an oven tray with a baking paper without any oven dish - the shape would be more rustic)

For dough:

3.5 dl + 5 tsp (or 1 1/2 cups) very warm water (but not boiling)

2 tsp active dry yeast

2 tbsp olive oil

2 tsp dark syrup (or maple syrup)

1 tsp salt

8.5 dl + 5 tsp (or 3 1/2 cups) strong bread flour (in Finnish: hiivaleipäjauho)

For topping:

100 gr. fresh basil leaves

4 tbsp olive oil, plus a bit more to grease oven dish if using and a bit more to drizzle on top right after baking

breadcrumbs to spread on the bottom of oven dish

Instructions:

1. In a big bowl, put warm water and yeast and give it quick mix. Leave for 10 minutes for yeast to start working.

2. After 10 minutes, there should be a little foam on top of the water, which shows that yeast is active. At this point, put olive oil, syrup and salt and mix well.

3. Gradually add bread flour and mix / fold until it forms - loose - dough.

4. Gently dust your working surface with bread flour and put the dough on it. Dust the top of the dough with a little more bread flour and start kneading. Knead the dough for at least 5 minutes, until you get a soft, elastic, smooth dough.

5. Get a clean bowl and brush the inside with olive oil. Put bread dough in it, brush the surface of the dough lightly with olive oil as well. Cover the bowl with stretch film and put the bowl in a warm spot in your kitchen. Leave the dough to double in size, for about 1 hour (it may take longer or shorter depending on how warm your kitchen is).

6. While dough is rising, prepare the topping. Using mortar and pestle, beat fresh basil leaves until they are fragrant and in smaller pieces. Add olive oil (1 tbsp at a time, since 4 tbsp might be too much to put in one go) and continue beating. Put aside.

7. When the dough is about to be ready, preheat the oven to 190C.

8. When the dough is doubled in size, it is ready.

9. Dust your working surface lightly with flour. Put the dough on the counter and very lightly dust its top with flour.

10. Without beating the air in the dough out, fold the dough 4 times.

11. Grease a 25x35cm oven dish generously with olive oil and spread breadcrumbs on the bottom.

12. Spread the bread dough using your fingertips inside the oven dish. Put the topping on top. Again, using your fingertips, make the topping go deep into the dough. Cover the dish with stretch film and let it proof for 25 minutes.

13. When it is ready to bake, take away the stretch film. Spread some salt on top and put in the oven, in medium rack. Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, until it is baked and slightly browned on top.

14. When the bread is baked and is fresh out of the oven, drizzle generously with olive oil (this is optional, but I highly recommend it). Let the bread cool down in the dish for 5 minutes and then put it on a wire rack to cool further. Enjoy it with a meal or just by itself!