

Fougasse (LF)

Makes 440g loaf or 6 x 70g rolls

Ingredients:

- 250 g of plain or bread flour
- 2 tsp of easy blend (dried) yeast
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 3 tbs of olive oil plus more to drizzle
- 125 ml hand hot water
(or whey from our brousse recipe – see website)
- Flavours (see variations below)

Polish – optional

Mix 50 g flour / 50 g water, pinch of yeast



Fougasse was traditionally used in France to assess the temperature of a wood fired oven. The time it would take to bake gives an idea of the oven temperature and whether the rest of the bread can be loaded. It is typically associated with Provence but found with variations in other regions of France. It is similar to the Italian focaccia bread. It is often slashed to resemble an ear of wheat or topped with herbs, olives, sun dried tomatoes or other flavourings. It is best eaten straight from the oven!

Method:

Heat oven to 210C – remember you have a couple of hours of “proving” before you need it!

Sift the flour and salt and into a large bowl

Whisk the warm water (or whey) and yeast together leave to stand for 10 minutes. Wait until the mix is frothy (if it doesn't froth and foam the yeast may be dead in which case get some more and start over!)

Add the olive oil to the yeast, then using your fingers, mix with the flour until the dough clumps together and leaves the sides of the bowl clean. It should be soft but not sticky (you may need a little more liquid depending on the humidity at the time).

Gently knead the ball of dough on a lightly floured surface for about 5-10 minutes using the heel of your hand and turning the dough as you go, finish by folding it over so that the creases are on the bottom. It should be smooth and springy. (We tend to knead for just about 5 minutes and not overwork the gluten for a lighter result).

Rub the inside of the bowl with olive oil and cover the dough with a film of oil and a tea towel or cling film and prove in a warm place for 60-90 minutes or until doubled in size. Turn out and “knock back” the dough by using the same kneading process for 2-3 minutes.

Pat the dough into your preferred shape or divide into 6 smaller shapes. We find a circle of dough cut in half and then into six triangles works well.

Add any toppings or just drizzle with oil and salt (see below) – spray with water a few times to help the crust develop.

Leave to prove again in a lightly oiled cake tin until the rolls or loaf have doubled in size. Usually about 30 minutes depending on how warm your room is!

A large domed Fougasse will take about 30 minutes to bake, smaller rolls about 15-20 minutes and a thin wheat sheaf shape about 10-15 minutes.

You can turn the loaf over half way through the cooking process to allow it to cook on the bottom (optional - but difficult if you have a topping or seeds!)

The top and bottom should be golden brown and sound hollow. Always cool on a wire rack to ensure that no steam is trapped which will make the bread soggy. Serve immediately with lots of salty French butter!

Bread sticks

Roll out your dough to a rectangle, sprinkle with any toppings (fennel seeds, finely grated cheese).

Use a pizza wheel to slice into 1 cm strips.

Twist each strip to separate slightly before baking.

Spray with water and bake at **170C for 10 minutes and then reduce to 150C until baked.**

Variations:

This is a quick bread, best enjoyed straight from the oven. The variations to add into the mix or as a topping are endless.....

Fresh or dried herbs like rosemary, basil or thyme added into the flour; sprigs of fresh rosemary pushed into the top;

Use flavoured oils instead of the olive oil – keep the oil from sundried tomatoes;

Pieces of sun dried tomato, stoned olives, roasted onion jam, or confit garlic;

Feta; ricotta; blue cheese; cheddar – any cheese really; or

Fennel seeds & orange zest, dried cranberry or fig can be added into the mix, or as a topping – great with a cheese plate