

Simple Sourdough Focaccia

This sourdough focaccia comes together in one bowl – no fancy shaping required! If you're a sourdough beginner, fear not. This recipe is difficult to mess up and thoroughly annotated for technique and troubleshooting.

Prep, then refrigerate and bake depending on your schedule. Customize with toppings for a no-fuss side guaranteed to impress at dinner. – Angela



Ingredients (for 9x13 inch pan)

Dough

- 450 grams all-purpose flour
- 360 grams water
- 7.2 grams salt
- 90 grams active starter

Baker's Percentage

- 100% all-purpose flour
- 80% water
- 1.6% salt
- 20% active starter

Toppings

- 20 grams olive oil
- 3 grams flaky salt

Recipe

Prepare dough

1. Mix **starter** and **water** together. Add **flour** and **salt**. Mix until there is no dry flour left.
2. Cover the dough. Rest the dough for 30 minutes.
3. [Perform stretch and folds](#). Rest the dough for 30 minutes.
4. Perform 3 sets of [coil folds](#). Rest the dough for 30 minutes in between each set of coil folds.

Timeline for Steps 1-4:

Mix dough – 30 min – **Stretch and folds** – 30 min – **1st Coil fold** – 30 min – **2nd Coil fold** – 30 min – **3rd Coil fold**

5. Cover the bowl. Rest on countertop (76°F/24°C) for 2 hours.
6. Store the covered dough in a refrigerator (38-40°F/3-4°C) for up to 1 week.


Bake

1. Line a 9x13 pan with wax paper. Brush the paper with **10 grams of olive oil**.
2. Invert the bowl over the pan. Allow the dough to drop down into the pan.
3. Spread the dough out into a rectangle. [Fold into thirds](#).
4. Cover the pan. Let the dough rise for 2 hours at 76°F/24°C, or until the surface of the dough has visible bubbles and has doubled in size.
5. Spread the dough out to fill the pan.
6. Top with **flaky salt** and the remaining **olive oil**. [Dimple the dough](#).
7. Toward the end of the rise, **preheat oven to 450°F/230°C**.
8. Bake on the middle rack for 25 minutes.
9. Rotate the pan 180 degrees and transfer to bottom rack. Continue baking for 10 minutes, or until focaccia is golden brown.
10. Cool for at least 30 minutes before slicing.

Topping variations

Customize your focaccia with an assortment of toppings.

- Rosemary and garlic
- Scalloped potatoes and onion
- Sesame seeds
- Cheese
- Za'atar

 **Tip:** Coat produce in oil to prevent burning.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I feed my starter?

Feed your starter based on a **1:1:1 ratio of starter, flour, and water**. For example, if you have 30 grams of starter, feed 30 grams flour and 30 grams water.

Mix starter, flour, and water until there is no dry flour left. Mark the starter's height and let it ferment on the counter. Depending on the ambient temperature, a starter should double in height within 4-8 hours of feeding. **Use starter within 6 hours of peaking.**

The optimal time to use a starter is when it has doubled in height and is just beginning to fall.



Starter that has just been fed



Starter at peak activity

What flour should I feed my starter?

Unbleached all-purpose or bread flour are the most common choices for feeding starters. For a more flavorful bread, try feeding your starter with whole wheat or rye flour. You can even experiment with millet flour or brown rice flour!

Refrain from using cake flour to feed your starter. Cake flour is generally bleached, making it a less optimal food source for naturally occurring yeast.

Can I bake with a different flour?

All-purpose (9-11% protein) is used in this recipe because it is the most common flour in household kitchens. Bread flour (12-16% protein) contains more gluten, which provides a chewier crumb. If using bread flour, compensate for extra water absorption by adding 5-10% more water by flour weight. Use up to 30% whole grain flour for added flavor.

Do not use more than 30% whole grain flour. The crumb will be dense and lack the large bubbles characteristic to focaccia.

Can I use unfed starter?

Yes, but the crumb may lack the characteristic lift and open bubbles of focaccia. When using a newly established starter, it's best to use fed starter to ensure the presence of active yeast.

Why use grams?

In baking, grams are preferred for accuracy. Scooping ingredients directly with a measuring cup causes ingredient compaction, resulting in denser baked goods.

Some home bakers spoon ingredients into a measuring cup and then level off with a knife. However, this method still results in inconsistent ingredient amounts because measuring by volume does not account for ingredient density.

For example:

1 teaspoon of fine table salt = approximately 6 grams

1 teaspoon of kosher salt = approximately 3 grams

Measuring with grams also allows you to scale recipes easily using baker's percentage. Not to mention, you have less dishes to wash afterward!

Can I skip refrigeration?

Yes. Cold fermentation provides additional flavor and allows for greater baking flexibility by pausing yeast activity, but it is not necessary. If you prefer a less sour flavor, shorten the cold fermentation time or skip cold fermentation altogether.

References


What is baker's percentage?₁

Baker's percentage is the expression of each ingredient as a percentage of the flour weight. You can learn more about it [here](#).

What is a stretch and fold?₂



1. Stretch one side of the dough upward without tearing.
2. Fold the dough over to opposite side as though you are folding a piece of paper in half.
3. Rotate your bowl 45 degrees. Repeat stretch and fold.
4. Continue until all sides have been folded over.

 **Tip:** Wet hands periodically to prevent dough from sticking.

What is one set of coil folds?₃

For one set of coil folds, complete the following steps.

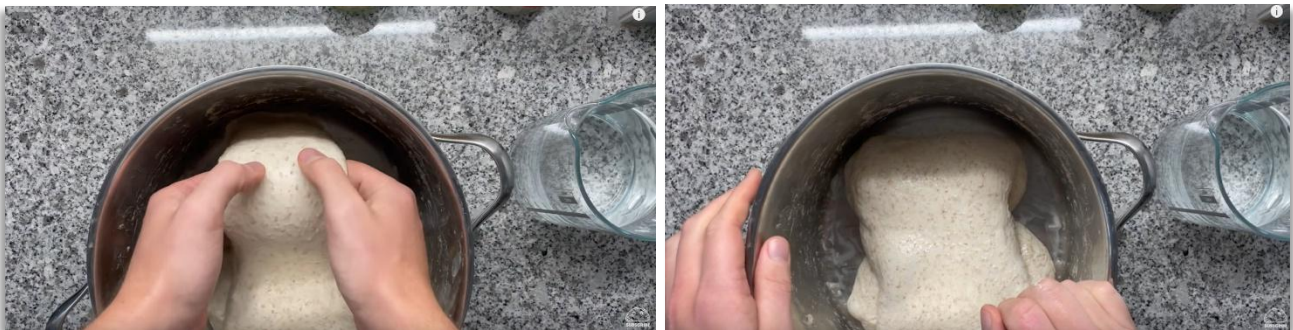
[Reference images from [The Bread Code on YouTube](#).]



1. Grab the dough in the middle and lift upward.



2. Extend the dough upward without tearing. Fold the top half over itself.



3. Rotate your bowl 180 degrees so that the folded flap is facing you. Repeat Step 2.



4. Repeat coil folding until the dough has gained more surface tension. The dough should hold its shape without spreading out, and the surface should be noticeably smoother.



5. Turn your bowl 90 degrees. Repeat coil folding until the dough has gained more surface tension without spreading out.

How do I fold into thirds?₄



1. Wet hands to prevent sticking,
2. Fold over 1/3 of the dough as though you are folding a piece of paper.
3. Repeat with the other side, folding it over the rest of the dough.
4. Turn dough lengthwise to match the rectangular shape of the baking sheet.

How do I dimple the dough?₅



1. Using your fingers, press holes throughout the dough. Press to the bottom of the tray.
2. Spread dough to fill tray completely.

Troubleshooting

Focaccia is an exceptionally forgiving dough. It can still taste great even if it doesn't turn out perfectly. But if you've got your heart set on the perfect focaccia, here are some troubleshooting tips.

Focaccia has a dense and gummy crumb.



A dense crumb has several possible reasons.

- 1. Starter was not mature.**

It takes at least 2 weeks for a new starter to be robust enough to leaven bread. The starter may rise and fall several times within 2 weeks. Much of this early-stage activity is due to increased bacterial activity as the natural yeast colony establishes. For best results, use a starter that is at least 1 month old and reliably doubles in size within 4-8 hours of feeding.

- 2. Dough was not fermented long enough.**

While this recipe provides a suggested preparation timeline, base your fermentation time on your surrounding temperature and the look and feel of the dough. A properly fermented dough should be doubled in size, have some bubbles on the surface, and jiggle when shaken.

If your ambient temperature is too cold (below 68°F/20°C), ferment the dough in the oven with the oven light turned on or place it near a space heater.

Take caution that the temperature does not exceed 95°F/35°C.



Dough at beginning of second counter fermentation



Dough is properly fermented and ready to bake

3. Focaccia was not baked long enough.

Bake for an extra 5-10 minutes on the middle rack.

4. Focaccia contained extra whole grain flour.

Using over 30% whole grain flour results in a gummier crumb than all-purpose or bread flour.

Focaccia has a tight crumb.



Most likely due to over fermenting on the second counter rise.

If using bread flour or whole grain flour, consider adding 5-10% more water for a more open crumb.

Focaccia color is too pale.

Bake on bottom rack for an extra 5-10 minutes.

Cold fermentation will also promote deeper browning and blistering.

Focaccia crust burns easily.

Make sure you are using a light-colored metal baking pan. Anodized aluminum is the bakery standard because it conducts heat quickly and efficiently. The light pan color ensures a crisp but not overly dark crust.

Otherwise, you can bake the focaccia on the middle rack exclusively. For added protection against burning, add an empty baking tray on the lower rack to cover your oven's bottom heating element.