

Ingredients

227g Active Sourdough Starter (100% hydration)
417g Warm Water
663g All Purpose Flour
66g Wheat Gluten
10g Sugar

Separately:

57g Olive Oil
17g Salt

Additional Oil will be need for the pans

Method

This recipe utilizes a stand mixer but can be mixed by hand, I would suggest using a rubber spatula in that case. This recipe can be made in one day if you start in the morning or you can allow it to bulk ferment in the fridge overnight. I usually start around 10 AM - 12 PM so that the dough can be ready in time for dinner. If you want to do this in one day, be aware that this takes about 6-8 hours, most of that time is allocated for allowing the dough to rest though so no need to panic over hard work, each step is pretty easy assuming you use the stand mixer.

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer add the starter and the water. Mix them together into a milky liquid.
2. Add the flour, wheat gluten, and sugar. If you do not have wheat gluten then you can sub more flour or just use all bread flour instead. The purpose of the wheat gluten is to add protein to the flour which gives the dough more structure and chew.
3. Mix on medium speed for about 10 minutes. The dough should come together into a ball. Scrape the sides of the bowl periodically to ensure that all the flour is incorporated.
4. After mixing, remove the mixing bowl from the stand mixer and cover the bowl with a damp kitchen towel. Allow the dough to rest for 30 minutes.
5. While the dough is resting, weigh out the salt and oil into a small bowl. Set this off to the side.

While I could have just added the salt and oil to the mixer with the flour, I wanted to

create a “mock autolyse.” A true autolyse is just flour and water mixed gently into a dough and allowed to rest so that the flour can fully hydrate. If you want to just dump everything into the bowl together then please be my guest but that isn’t how I do the recipe. A lot of people say that the salt has a bad effect on the yeast as well and can hinder its growth or kill it. I’m not sure if that makes sense but I tend to follow this thinking anyway just in case. You are free to mix the dough however you like though.

6. a. After the resting period uncover the mixing bowl and pour the oil and salt over the top. Using clawed fingers, start poking the oil and salt into the dough. The oil will not mix in right away but by the end of the next few steps should become fully incorporated. Continue pinching and poking the dough for another 2-3 minutes and rest for 30 minutes.
- b. To perform a stretch and fold, pull the dough on one side up as far as possible without tearing it and then drape or fold it over the rest of the dough. Turn the bowl 90 degrees and do the stretch and fold again. Repeat for 4 total stretch and folds. After I have completed the stretch and folds I also like to do an extra step where I sort of knead the dough over the bowl and tuck the dough into the center. I like to think that this helps the oil to be absorbed a little better, feel free to try this out or alternatively you can just skip this bit. Your hands will be oily, try to scrape off as much of that oil on the side of the bowl as you can so that it can be mixed in too. Cover the bowl with a damp towel and allow the dough to rest for another 30 minutes.
7. After the previous resting period, perform another series of stretch and folds. Then rest again for 30 minutes. Repeat this process another 2 times with 30 minute rests in between each series of stretch and folds. You will have done a total of 4 series of stretch and folds. After the last stretch and fold, cover the bowl with a damp towel and rest again but for 2-3 hours this time preferably in a warm spot.

I like to set my dough in my oven with the proof setting on. You can set yours in the oven even if you do not have a proof setting, just DO NOT turn the oven on. Other ideal spots might be near a radiator, on top of a running dishwasher or refrigerator. Anywhere you feel is “warm.” If you do not have an ideally warm place then just on the counter away from a drafty spot will do. Just be mindful that if the ambient temperature is a little cold then the dough will take a little longer to work its magic.

Optionally, at this point you could also try a cold ferment and leave the dough in the fridge overnight, maybe 13-15 hours. Just cover the bowl with plastic wrap so that moisture doesn’t escape. Please note, I haven’t tried this myself but in theory it should work out very well and will allow the dough to develop more of a sour flavor. If you try it please let me know. I’ll get around to it myself eventually.

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8. At the end of the 2-3 hour period you will need to oil your pans.

I usually bake two loaves/pizzas, one in a deep 9 x 13 aluminum pan and one in a 10 inch cast iron skillet. You can do both in cast iron skillets, (highly recommended) or you can do both in two 8 x 8 aluminum pans or something similar.

Pour at least 3 tablespoons of oil into a pan and use your fingers to spread it around and coat the entire surface. This is very important because the dough will essentially fry in this oil and become very crispy.

9. Dump the dough out onto the counter and divide it roughly in half. If you are using one pan that is bigger than the other, like I do, then make one half of the dough slightly bigger. Gently pull the dough into the shape of the oiled pan and place it in the bottom. The dough will not fill up the entire area and that is ok. Cover the pans with a damp towel and put back in the warm spot for 1-3 hours.
10. After this final resting period, set your oven to 450 degrees F. If your dough is in the oven then make sure you have taken it out first.
11. Remove the towel from the pan. Your dough should appear much bigger and airy. Stretch the dough gently to make it fit in the pan if it hasn't completely filled it already. Then start stabbing at it with your fingertips to make divots.
12. Now it is time to add toppings.

For focaccia:

You may leave your focaccia plain if you like and just top it with a drizzle of olive oil and a sprinkle of coarse or flakey salt. I recommend adding some sort of topping though. You can add mostly anything but I recommend 1-3 toppings. My favorite things to add to focaccia are: kalamata olives, tomatoes, and onions. You may also consider cloves of roasted garlic, rosemary, or oregano. Poke your toppings into the divots in the dough so it can "hold" them. You do not want to blanket the dough in toppings, leave about an inch or so between each of them. Drizzle or brush with olive oil and a sprinkle of coarse salt.

For pizza:

This dough is the perfect base for Detroit style or sicilian pizza. I usually make Detroit style in the 9 x 13 inch aluminum pan. To make Detroit style pizza you will specifically need brick cheese. It's a special variety of cheese used for this style of pizza. Since I am a vegan, unfortunately I can't elaborate on this further but I make this pizza by request for other people and they enjoy it very much. Basically, you have to use 1 lb of sliced bricked cheese and layer it across the top of the dough, allowing it to touch the sides of the pan. During baking the cheese will "burn" and this makes a crispy burnt

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cheese rim around the crust of the pizza. The corner pieces are especially coveted because of this. You can add other toppings if desired but I recommend not going too crazy so that the dough isn't totally weighed down and unable to rise properly. A very thick tomato sauce is applied to the top in three strips after baking.

Vegan Pizza:

For a vegan pizza you would just use your favorite variety of vegan cheese. I usually use daiya mozzarella. Eventually I will try making my own cheese but I like this cheese well enough. I make a "mock chicago style" pizza in my cast iron skillet. I add a variety of veggies first, usually kalamata olives, tomatoes, onions, mushrooms, and red peppers or whatever I have on hand at the time. Then I add one or two handfuls of vegan shredded cheese and then on top I add a nice layer of thick tomato sauce. I highly recommend letting some of the tomato sauce touch the edge of the dough so that it can caramelize in the oven. The caramelized edges are my favorite part. I say this is a mock chicago style pizza because I do not use cornmeal in the dough or in the pan, this is usually a staple of chicago style pizza. I do like to arrange my ingredients in the same order though with the sauce on top.

13. Whichever version you are doing, bake at 450 degrees F for about 25 minutes.

If you are making a Detroit style pizza you will notice that the cheese will start to majorly brown and there will be a lot of oil bubbling on the sides of the pan. Try not to panic, that is exactly what should happen here. I will also caution you that some of the oil may burn a little causing your smoke alarm to go off but don't panic about that either. I like to just keep an eye on things and take the battery out of the smoke alarm until the pizza is done. I've done this a dozen times and haven't caused a fire yet but I will remind you to please be very cautious regardless of your level of cooking experience.

14. After 25 minutes take your pizzas or focaccias out of the oven.

I like to check for doneness by sliding a spatula under the pizza and looking at the bottom. If it is a golden brown then it is done. Carefully slide the pizzas out of the pans using a spatula and maybe a friend, and onto a baking sheet or cutting board. It will be much easier to slice this way. I highly recommend allowing them to cool for 10 minutes before cutting so that the cheese doesn't run all over the place. I also add the sauce to the Detroit style pizza at this time. My sauce is usually warm or hot because I had been cooking it for most of the day. If you are using store bought sauce I would recommend heating it before applying it to your pizza.

After 10 minutes cut your pizza. If you made focaccia then you may want to wait a bit longer for it to cool depending on when you want to eat it.

Cut a Detroit or Sicilian style pizza into 12 pieces. I like to follow the lines of sauce to first divide it into three long pieces and then I cut those in half and then cut them in half again

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to get mostly even sized slices. For a pizza made in the cast iron skillet I will usually just cut it into quarters and then selfishly have two pieces to myself.

If for some reason you have left over pizza you can store it in an airtight container for 2-3 days in the refrigerator. We sometimes like to freeze it wrapped in foil and then reheat it in the oven.