

Olive Bread (Eliopsomo)

from *Food From Many Greek Kitchens* by Tessa Kiros

2 tsp active dry yeast

pinch of sugar

5 1/2 oz warm water

3 cups bread flour

1/2 tsp salt

1 TBSP olive oil, plus extra for brushing

1/2 cup drained pitted Kalamata olives, halved

1 tsp dried oregano

small spring of dried oregano for the top

Scatter the yeast into a large bowl. Add the sugar and 5 1/2 oz warm water and leave to activate and bubble for about 10 minutes. Add the flour, salt, and olive oil and mix first with a wooden spoon, then your hands to get a soft dough. Knead for 8-10 minutes, until smooth and spongy. Wipe out the bowl with a paper towel and put the dough in. Make a cross on the dough by pressing with the edge of your hand (to bless the dough). Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and then a dish cloth and put in a warm spot for a couple of hours to rise.

Pat the olives dry. Put them in a bowl with the oregano and toss well. When the dough has risen and is double in size, knead it again, this time working in the olives and oregano until they are evenly distributed. You might need to use a little extra flour, as the olives will add some oil to the dough. Shape into an oval loaf, making sure a few olives are showing on the outside. Put on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Brush the bread with oil and if you have the sprig of oregano, press this onto the top. cover with a dish cloth and leave in a warm spot for about 1 hour to rise again.

In the meantime, preheat the oven to 400 F. Bake the bread for 30 minutes, until it s golden and sounds hollow when tapped on the base. Cool on a wire rack before slicing.