

Focaccia di cipolla



This form of onion bread is an adaptation of a Genoese focaccia recipe and uses the dough to cover the onions, preventing the sugars burning. Onions are surprisingly sweet when cooked and make a nice contrast to the sprinkling of sea salt.

Red onions in particular are nutrient dense containing more antioxidants than other onions, with quercetin and anthocyanin making them a very beneficial part of an anti-inflammatory diet.

The diallyl sulphides which contribute to the 'bite' of an onion, help produce cysteine within the body aiding weight loss, detoxification and cancer prevention. Generally considered beneficial for the cardiovascular system they inhibit blood cell clumping and reduce LDL cholesterol and blood pressure.

Credits: Ceri, Zenxin master chef

Key facts:

- Preparation: 10+30+8+60+30 mins
- Cooking time: 25 mins
- Total: 163 mins
- Serves: 10-12

Ingredients:

- 600g organic red onions, sliced

Starter:

- 2½ tsp (1 pkt) active dry yeast
- 2/3 cup warm water (40.5 °C)
- 1 cup (140g) unbleached organic bread flour
- flour

Dough:

- ½ cup warm water, room temperature
- 1/3 cup dry organic white wine

- 1/3 cup extra virgin cold-pressed Spanish organic olive oil plus 'Sponge' starter as above
- 2½ cups unbleached organic bread flour
- 1 cup organic wholemeal bread flour

Topping:

- Drizzle of extra virgin cold-pressed Spanish organic olive oil
- 2 pinches of sea salt crystals

Methods:

1. Sprinkle yeast over warm water in large bowl.
2. Let stand for 10 mins till frothy.
3. Stir in first cup of unbleached flour and whisk until smooth.
4. Cover and let rise for 30 mins, this forms the 'sponge'

(After 30 mins the yeast is fermenting the complex carbohydrates producing the carbon dioxide bubbles, which leaven the bread.)

5. Add salt to the water, whisk in the wine and olive oil, add to sponge.
6. Add in 1 cup of flour and stir gently, then gradually add in the rest of the flour until you have a soft sticky dough.
7. If too sticky, add a little more flour and knead in the bowl for 8 minutes until silky and shiny. The dough should be still soft but not wet.
8. Cover the dough and allow to rise for 1 hr, until it has roughly doubled in size.
9. Preheat the oven to 220 °C
10. Line the baking sheet with baking paper and cover with sliced onions.
11. For the third rise gently stretch and press the soft airy dough onto the onions covering them and filling the tray.
12. Dimple it well using your fingers, cover again and leave to rise for another 30 minutes or until the mass has doubled.
13. Finally drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with sea salt.
14. Place in an oven preheated to 220 °C, then reduce to 200 °C.
15. Bake for 25 minutes.
16. Spray the oven with water at intervals for the first 10 mins for a crisp crust.
17. Remove when golden and enjoy while still hot!