

Schiacciata con l'uva (Tuscan Grape Focaccia)

In September, Italy turns its undivided attention to the grape harvest (*vendemmia*). Well, it's not totally undivided. They always spend some time baking this bread, which means "flattened" or "squashed." Wine grapes are sweeter, juicier and less seedy than table grapes. They go in the bread. Walnuts are harvested at the same time, so they go in the bread. It's very rustic, and it shouldn't be fussed over. It's lovely with aged or runny cheeses, vin santo and some prosciutto. Harvest heist.

See Cook's Note on how to handle leftovers, if there are any.

Ingredients

Dough

1 packet active dry yeast (2¼ teaspoons)
1¼ cups warm water (100 to 110 degrees)
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus 1 teaspoon for oiling bowl
3½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more if needed

Filling and Topping

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
2 cups Concord grapes (preferably seeded) or seedless black grapes, removed from stems, washed and patted dry
1/2 cup walnut halves, chopped
2 teaspoons turbinado sugar
1 teaspoon anise seed
1 tablespoon fresh rosemary leaves, stripped from the stem
2 teaspoons Maldon sea salt

special equipment

rimmed baking sheet (jelly roll pan), 10½-by-15 inches (or a similar size, rectangular or round)

Directions

for the dough

Sprinkle yeast over the water in a measuring cup and stir to dissolve. Let sit 5 minutes. Stir in 3 tablespoons olive oil.

Put 1½ cups of flour into the bowl of stand mixer fitted with the dough hook. Add liquid and mix on low for 5 minutes. Sprinkle in the rest of the flour. Mix on low speed until the dough clings to the dough hook and has pulled away from the sides of the bowl, about 5 minutes. Continue to knead on low until smooth and elastic. Dough should be sticky but easy to handle. Add more flour, a tablespoon at a time, if it's too sticky to handle.

Gather the dough into a smooth ball and place it in a bowl, lightly oiled with 1 teaspoon of oil. Roll the dough in the bowl to coat it completely with oil. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and let the dough rise, at room temperature, until it doubles in size, 45 minutes to 1 hour.

for filling and topping

Use 1 tablespoon of olive oil to oil the bottom and sides of the baking pan.

Turn the risen dough out of the bowl and divide into pieces, $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{2}{3}$ of the dough. Stretch the larger piece in your hands, then pat and press it into the pan, using your fingertips to stretch and pull until it fills the pan. If it shrinks back, let it rest for a few minutes. Don't worry about getting it perfectly even or smooth. If it tears, just pinch the torn edges together and continue. It'll all bake out in the end.

Scatter about two-thirds of the grapes over the dough in the pan, pressing them into the dough a little bit. Sprinkle half each of the walnuts, sugar and anise seeds over the surface.

Take the smaller piece of dough and stretch it in your hands, then lay it on top. Pull and pat it to the edges, covering the filling. This is messy but not difficult. Don't worry if a grape from underneath pokes through a hole now and then. When you've got it covered, pinch the dough around the edges to enclose it all.

Press the remaining grapes into the top dough and sprinkle the rest of the walnuts, sugar and anise seeds over all. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and let rise at room temperature until puffy, about 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 450 degrees with a rack in the bottom position.

When the dough is ready, use your fingertips to dimple the surface all over, pressing the grapes deeper into the dough as you do.

Heat the remaining 3 tablespoons olive oil with rosemary leaves in a small skillet over medium heat until sizzling and fragrant, about 1 minute. Pour or spoon over the dough, letting the oil fill the cavities and spacing the rosemary leaves evenly. Sprinkle with the salt.

Bake 20 minutes, turning the pan halfway through the cooking time. The focaccia is done when the top is golden brown and the grapes are burst and bubbling.

Cool in the pan on a wire rack for 5 minutes. Run a large spatula under the focaccia (to loosen any grapes that might have stuck to the pan) and transfer directly to the rack to cool before cutting to serve.

Cook's Note

Wrap any leftovers in plastic wrap, but eat them within a day. The bread will become more cake-like, and the flavors will develop as it sits.

total time: 2¼ hours

active prep: 30 minutes

serves: 10 (20 squares)

difficulty: *medium*