GENERAL

paul hollywood bread recipes focaccia

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Introduction

When you think of iconic British bakers, the name **Paul Hollywood** immediately comes to mind. A former judge on the popular television show *The Great British Bake Off*, Hollywood has turned his passion for bread into a thriving brand, publishing a range of **Paul Hollywood bread recipes focaccia**that have captured the hearts of home bakers worldwide. Focaccia, with its airy crumb, crispy crust, and versatile flavor profile, is a natural fit for Hollywood's emphasis on simple yet sophisticated baking. In this guide, we'll explore the journey of Paul Hollywood's focaccia, dissect his techniques, and give you a step by step recipe that will bring the bakery experience into your own kitchen.

Paul Hollywood's Baking Philosophy

Paul Hollywood's success is rooted in a few core principles that transcend any single recipe:

- Quality Ingredients – He champions the use of high grade flour, fresh yeast, and pure, unadulterated salt.
- Time and Patience – A meticulous approach to fermentation and resting times ensures maximum flavor development.
- Technique Over Trickery – Hollywood emphasizes mastering basic skills—like proper kneading and shaping—before moving on to more complex variations.
- Accessibility – Despite his professional background, his recipes are written in plain language, making them approachable for novices.

Why Focus on Focaccia?

Focaccia is a bread that embodies simplicity and versatility. Its dough is forgiving, making it perfect for beginners, while its open crumb and flavor potential appeal to seasoned bakers. Paul Hollywood's fascination with focaccia stems from its Mediterranean roots and the way it showcases the essence of good bread: a crisp, flavorful crust with a tender, airy interior.

The Rise of Focaccia in the UK

While focaccia has long been a staple in Italian cooking, its popularity in the United Kingdom has surged over the past decade. This rise can be attributed to several factors:

- Globalization of Food Culture – The UK's culinary scene has become increasingly open to international flavors.
- Home Baking Boom – The pandemic accelerated interest in bread making, and focaccia's straightforward process made it a favorite.
- Celebrity Bakers – Figures like Paul Hollywood have helped legitimize focaccia as a staple in British bakeries.

Paul Hollywood's Focaccia Inspiration

Hollywood's approach to focaccia is heavily influenced by his time spent in Italy, where he learned to appreciate the bread's rustic charm. He often cites the importance of:

1. High Protein Flour – Using bread flour or a blend of bread and all purpose flour for structure.
2. Cold Fermentation – Allowing the dough to rest in the refrigerator for 12–24 hours enhances flavor.
3. Olive Oil – Both in the dough and as a finishing drizzle, olive oil imparts richness and aids browning.
4. Simple Seasonings – A sprinkle of sea salt, rosemary, or even caramelized onions can transform the bread.

Classic Paul Hollywood Focaccia Recipe

Below is a faithful rendition of Paul Hollywood's classic focaccia, adapted for home kitchens. The recipe yields a 12 inch round loaf, perfect for serving as a side or for making sandwiches.

Ingredients

- 500 /g high protein bread flour ("H4 cups)
- 350 /ml warm water ("H1 /½ cups, 38–40 /°C)
- 2 /tsp sea salt
- 2 /tsp sugar
- 7 /g instant dry yeast ("H2 /¼ /tsp)
- 60 /ml extra virgin olive oil ("H¼ cup), plus extra for drizzling
- Optional toppings: fresh rosemary, cracked black pepper, sea salt flakes, sliced olives, caramelized onions, cherry tomatoes, or thinly sliced fennel

Equipment

- Large mixing bowl
- Spatula or dough whisk
- Digital kitchen scale (recommended)
- Silicone baking mat or parchment paper
- Oven rack
- Cooling rack

Method

1. Activate Yeast

In a small bowl, combine warm water, sugar, and yeast. Let sit for 5–10 /minutes until frothy. This step confirms the yeast is active.

2. Mix Dry Ingredients

In a large bowl, whisk together flour and sea salt. Create a well in the center and pour in the yeast mixture.

3. Combine and Knead

Stir with a spatula until a shaggy dough forms. Transfer to a lightly floured surface and knead for 8–10 /minutes until smooth and elastic. Alternatively, use a stand mixer with a dough hook on medium speed for 6–7 /minutes.

4. Add Olive Oil

During the last 2 /minutes of kneading, drizzle in 60 /ml of olive oil. This adds flavor and helps achieve a tender crumb.

5. First Rise

Place the dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover with cling film or a damp towel, and let rise at room temperature for 1 /hour, or until doubled in size.

6. Shape the Loaf

Gently deflate the dough and shape it into a round loaf. Place it on a silicone mat or parchment paper on a baking sheet.

7. Second Rise

Cover the shaped loaf again and let it rest for 30 /minutes. During this time, preheat the oven to 220 /°C (425 /°F).

8. Prepare Toppings

Using a pastry brush, lightly drizzle olive oil over the dough. Sprinkle sea salt flakes, crushed pepper, and any other chosen toppings. Press them gently into the surface.

9. Bake

Slide the baking sheet into the preheated oven. Bake for 18–22 /minutes, or until the crust is golden brown and the loaf sounds hollow when tapped on the bottom.

10. Cool

Remove the focaccia from the oven and let it cool on a rack for at least 15 /minutes before slicing. This allows the crumb to set fully.

Serving Suggestions

Focaccia's versatility shines when paired with a variety of dishes:

- As a side – Serve alongside soups, stews, or salads.
- For sandwiches – Use as a base for grilled cheese, paninis, or cold cuts.
- With dips – Pair with hummus, tapenade, or olive oil and balsamic vinegar.

Variations on the Classic Recipe

Paul Hollywood encourages experimentation. Below are a few proven variations that keep the core of the focaccia intact while adding unique flavors.

1. Rosemary and Sea Salt Focaccia

After the second rise, sprinkle fresh rosemary leaves and a generous pinch of sea salt. The rosemary infuses the dough with a fragrant aroma, while the salt enhances the overall flavor.

2. Olive and Tomato Focaccia

Scatter sliced cherry tomatoes and thinly sliced black olives on top before baking. The tomatoes caramelize slightly, creating a sweet contrast to the salty olives.

3. Caramelized Onion Focaccia

Spread thin layers of caramelized onions on the dough before baking. The onions add a deep, sweet flavor that pairs beautifully with the olive oil.

4. Fennel and Lemon Focaccia

Add thinly sliced fennel bulbs and a zest of lemon to the dough before baking. The fennel's mild licorice note and the citrus brightness create a refreshing loaf.

5. Sweet Cinnamon Raisin Focaccia

For a breakfast twist, mix in raisins and a sprinkle of cinnamon to the dough. Finish with a drizzle of honey after baking.

Tips for Perfect Focaccia Every Time

- Use a Digital Scale – Accurate measurements ensure consistent results.
- Let the Dough Rest – The second rise is crucial for a light crumb.
- Preheat the Oven Thoroughly – A hot oven produces a crisp crust.
- Use a Baking Stone or Steel – If available, these provide an even heat source.
- Don't Overmix – Overworking the dough can lead to a tough texture.
- Check the Temperature – Use an oven thermometer for accuracy.
- Cool on a Rack – This prevents the bottom from becoming soggy.

Pairing Ideas for Paul Hollywood Bread Recipes Focaccia

Pairing focaccia with complementary flavors can elevate a meal. Here are some curated suggestions:

- Cheese and Charcuterie Board – Pair with brie, gouda, prosciutto, and grapes.
- Mediterranean Mezze – Serve with hummus, tzatziki, olives, and grilled vegetables.
- Italian Dinner – Complement a pasta dish or a hearty lasagna.
- Breakfast – Spread with avocado, poached eggs, and a sprinkle of chili flakes.
- Snack – Use as a base for mini pizzas topped with fresh basil and mozzarella.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I use all purpose flour instead of bread flour?

Yes, but the bread will be slightly less chewy. Mixing 70% bread flour with 30% all purpose flour yields a good balance.

What if my dough doesn’t rise?

Check the yeast’s activity, water temperature, and ensure the dough has enough time to ferment. A warm, draft free environment helps.

Is it possible to make focaccia in a loaf pan?

Absolutely. Use a 9×5 inch loaf pan and adjust the baking time slightly.

Can I freeze the focaccia?

Yes. Cool completely, wrap tightly, and freeze for up to 2 months. Reheat in a 180 /°C oven for 10 minutes.

What are the health benefits of focaccia?

Focaccia made with whole grain flour, olive oil, and minimal salt offers heart healthy fats, fiber, and a low glycemic index.

Conclusion

Paul Hollywood’s **bread recipes focaccia**exemplify how a simple dough can evolve into a culinary masterpiece. By combining high quality ingredients, disciplined technique, and a willingness to experiment, you can create a focaccia that rivals those served in boutique bakeries. Whether you’re a novice eager to learn the basics or an experienced baker looking to add new variations to your repertoire, this guide offers the tools and inspiration you need. Grab your ingredients, follow the steps, and enjoy the aroma of fresh focaccia filling your kitchen—just as Hollywood does in his own bakery. Happy baking!

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