



# Lavender, Chilli & Rosemary Focaccia



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Focaccia originates from Italy and is enriched with olive oil, which gives the bread a soft texture. It can be topped with a variety of things, but rosemary and sea salt is the most common. We've gone a step further and used chilli flakes and some dried lavender flowers taking the flavour into another dimension. Focaccia is the perfect bread to be enjoyed with charcuterie, cheeses or even just simply dipped into a rich balsamic or fruit vinegar.

## Ingredients (serves 4-6)

- 118 ml pint hand hot water
- 1 tsp sugar
- 2 tsp dry active yeast
- 500g strong white flour
- 2 tsp salt
- 6 tbsp olive oil plus extra
- 225 ml tepid water (more may be needed)
- sea salt flakes for sprinkling
- a couple good pinches dried chilli flakes
- a couple of pinches of dried lavender flowers
- a few sprigs of fresh rosemary
- some semolina or polenta for dusting

## Method

In large jug mix yeast and sugar into 118 ml pint hand hot water, stir to dissolve. Set aside for about 10 minutes until the liquid turns frothy.

In a large bowl mix together the flour and salt. Stir in the olive oil. Add the yeast liquid and the water and use your hand to mix into a soft dough. The dough should be quite moist and sticky at first.

Turn out on to a well floured surface and knead the dough for about 10 to 15 minutes until it no longer sticks to your hands and becomes elastic and springy to the touch.

It is important to work the dough really well, making sure you stretch it and fold it back in on itself. This works the gluten from the flour so the dough rises.

Pour a couple of tablespoons of olive oil into a bowl and smear around, drop the dough ball in and cover with a damp tea towel and place in a warm place to rise, for around 1½ hours. After this time the dough should have doubled in size.

Slip the dough out the bowl on to a floured surface, knock back to remove air bubbles – you should be able to hear and feel the air puffing out – and knead again for 5 minutes. Then roll it out in to a flat oval shape. Not thin but slightly less thick than you want it to be when it's baked.

Place on an oiled baking sheet dusted with polenta or semolina, cover with a damp tea towel and place somewhere warm for about 30 minutes until it has risen and doubled again.

While it is rising, preheat the oven to 200C, Gas 6.

When the dough has risen, make indentations in it using your fingertips. Drizzle with olive oil and a little water. Sprinkle with sea salt to give an even and light coverage. Do the same again with the chilli flakes. Sprinkle over the pinch of lavender flowers, but be quite sparing as they have a strong flavour. Then pull, a few leaves at a time, off the rosemary and push into the dough.

Bake for approximately 20 minutes until golden brown and the loaf moves freely on the baking sheet. Slip on to a wire rack to cool.