

Learning Objectives

- Identify the origin and cultural significance of focaccia.
- Explain the texture, seasonings, and basic ingredients typical of focaccia.
- Understand why biga is used when making focaccia.
- Describe the focaccia making process.
- List and describe the different regional varieties of focaccia and other types of Italian breads.
- Prepare a variety of focaccia loaves representative of Italian flavors and methods using standardized recipes.

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Focaccia

Flat leavened oven-baked bread

Origin: from Ancient Rome, known as panis focacius, meaning "hearth bread"

Texture: soft, chewy texture from high oil content, slightly crispy crust

Seasonings: olive oil, herbs, salt

Olive oil provides a distinct flavor

Uses: side dish, snack, sandwich bread



Cultural Significance



- Credited to the Ligurian region
- A simple part of daily meals, particularly for the working class

Symbolism: represents hospitality, as its often made in large batches & shared with family

Olive Oil: a staple in Italian cuisine, also the pride of the Ligurian region, used to enhance focaccia

"No-Salt" Focaccia: "senza Sale", a cultural symbol of poverty, resilience

Basic Ingredients

Flour: high-quality bread flour

Yeast: leavening agent, fresh or active-dry

Sugar/malt syrup/honey: to feed the

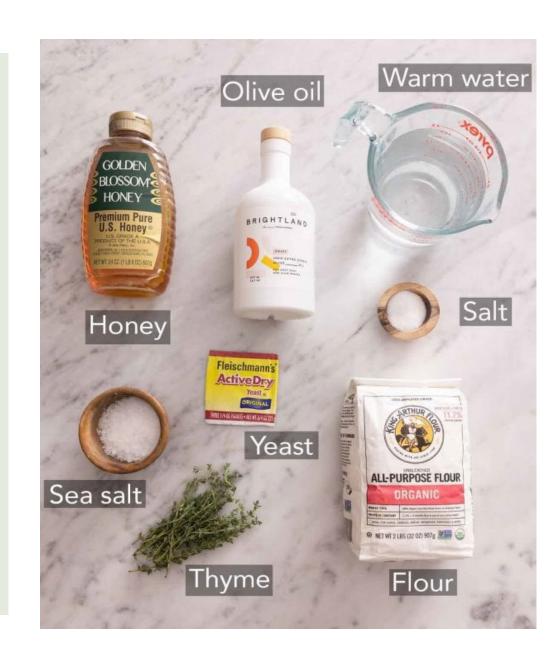
yeast

Olive oil: used in the dough + as a topping

Water: essential for gluten development & fermentation

Salt: to enhance flavors

Toppings: fresh rosemary, olives, garlic, cherry tomatoes, onions, etc.



Focaccia with Biga





- A low-hydration pre-ferment/ starter dough
- Used to enhance flavor, texture, shelf-life
- Biga is added to regular focaccia ingredients & baked normally

Ingredients: bread flour, water, a pinch of yeast

Method: add ingredients together, ferment at room temp. for 12-16 hours

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Making Focaccia

- 1. Combine yeast, water, biga, & flour. Knead into a homogenous dough.
- 2. Knead in salt & oil. Cover, let rise for 10 minutes.
- 3. Fold the dough, rest for 10 minutes. Repeat 2x.
- 4. Cover dough, proof for 1-2 hours.
- 5. Fit dough into sheet pan, rest for 10 minutes.
- 6. Oil generously & stipple the dough. Rest for 20 minutes.
- 7. Add preferred toppings.
- 8. Bake at 450°F for 20-25 minutes until golden brown.



Regional Varieties

Focaccia *Messinese* (Sicily): semolina flour, fish, cheese, escarole, cherry tomatoes

Focaccia con Patate (Puglia): potatoes, rosemary, garlic

Focaccia Toscana (Tuscany): cured meats & cheese

Focaccia al Formaggio (Liguria): thin, crisp dough, filled with stracchino cheese

Focaccia Barese (Puglia): durum flour, tomatoes, olives, oregano, rosemary



Other Italian Breads





Ciabatta: soft & airy, crispy crust, from Verona

Pane Toscano: dense & chewy, slightly sour flavor, from Tuscany

Pane Pugliese: round, crusty bread from Puglia

Pane di Altamura: highquality country-style, from Altamura

Piadina: thin flatbread from Romagna, often used as a wrap



Learning Objectives

- Describe the main characteristics typical of Italian desserts.
- List the popular flavors and ingredients found in Italian desserts.
- Describe the common textures found in Italian desserts.
- List the common fillings used in Italian desserts.
- Explain the typical cooking methods used and how they effect the texture and/or flavor of the dessert.
- Describe the distinctive characteristics of Italian cakes, pastries, frozen desserts, and cream based desserts.
- List and describe a variety of popular Italian desserts.
- Prepare a variety of dishes representative of Italian desserts using standardized recipes.



Characteristics

Balanced, subtitle sweetness: emphasizes natural flavors & sweetness rather than overpowering with sugar

Rich use of dairy: often creambased or filled

Ingredients: always fresh, simple

Layered flavors: to add depth, often with spices, herbs, citrus

Layered textures: creamy/crunchy, rich/ chewy



Flavors & Ingredients

Chocolate: dark, sweet, creamy

Coffee: bitter espresso/coffee liqueur

Citrus zest: sweet & tangy lemon/orange

Nuts: earthy, crunchy, sweet hazelnuts, pistachios

Almond: in marzipan & almond cakes

Vanilla: smooth & fragrant in custards/ pastries

Cheese: rich & creamy mascarpone, ricotta

Liqueurs: Amaretto, Marsala, Vin Santo,

Limoncello, rum



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Textures

Creamy, Smooth:

- Tiramisu, panna cotta, zabaglione
- Light, refreshing, pairs with fruit

Crispy, Crunchy:

- Cantucci, sfogliatella, crostata
- Balances smooth & creamy elements

Chewy, Soft:

Cannoli, fried dough

Dense, Rich:

- Panettone, baba
- Often soaked in liqueurs



Common Fillings



Creams: made from eggs, milk, cheese

Nut spreads: smooth & sweet, Nutella

Nut pastes: made from ground nuts,

sweet flavor, Marzipan

Whipped cream: light & fluffy, good with fruits

Fruit curds: tangy, sweet, colorful

Custards: creamy & rich, many flavors,

egg-based

Ganache: smooth, rich, made from

chocolate & cream

Cooking Methods

Frying: crispy outside, soft inside

Boiling: for pastry creams, syrups,

puddings

Chilling, setting: custards, creams,

mousses

Layering: combines without cooking

Freezing: creates creamy, refreshing

textures

Macerating: soaks fruits in syrup, alcohol to enhance flavor

Whipping: cream, egg whites for fluffiness



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Cakes



- Made with simple ingredients
- Often include nuts, fresh fruit
- Common components vary by region
- Essential on holidays, celebrations

Popular Cakes:

- Ricotta cheesecake
- Torta caprese
- Colomba pasquale
- Cassata siciliana

Tiramisu

- A dessert known to uplift spirits
- Tiramisù translates to "pick me up"
- Originated in Veneto or Friuli-Venezia
 Giulia

Flavors: sweet, slightly bitter, creamy Method:

- Ladyfingers (savoiardi) dipped in coffee or liqueur
- Layered with a mixture of egg yolks, sugar, mascarpone
- Topped with cocoa powder



Pastries



- Essential part of daily & regional cultures
- Eaten for breakfast, holidays, or snacks
- Often paired with coffee or wine
- Can be fried, baked, filled
- Many have a filling

Popular pastries:

- Crunchy almond cookies (biscotti, cantucci)
- Fried dough with custard (zeppole)
- Cream-filled flaky shells (sfogliatella)
- Sweet buns with cream (maritozzi)

Cannoli

- Crispy, fried shell filled with a ricotta cheese mixture
- A Sicilian pastry, representing the resilience, adaptability of Sicilians

Outer shell: light, flaky, slightly sweet Traditional filling: sweetened ricotta cheese

Toppings: dusted with sugar, chocolate **Variations:** chocolate, pistachio, fruity

fillings





Biscotti

- Twice-baked almond biscuit
- A symbol of Italian tradition, culinary heritage
- Has a crunchy, dry texture
- Often eaten with coffee
- Can be made chocolate, etc.

Classic ingredients: flour, nuts, flavorings

Flavor profile: dry, crispy, balanced sweetness mixed, subtle nutty flavor



Frozen Desserts

Semifreddo

- Originated in Emilia-Romagna, Italy
- Means "half frozen"
- Made from mousse & ice cream
- Flavored with nuts, fruits, vanilla, etc.
- Creamy, velvety texture

Gelato

- Originated in Florence, Italy
- Made from milk, heavy cream, egg yolks, sugar
- Flavored with vanilla, fruits, lavender, etc.
- Rich, creamy texture



Cream Desserts





Panna Cotta

- Originated in Piedmont, Italy
- Means "cooked cream"
- Made from mousse & ice cream
- Flavored with nuts, fruits, vanilla, etc.
- Rich, creamy texture

Zabaglione

- Originated in Piedmont, Italy
- Made from egg yolks, sugar, dry/ sweet wine
- Flavored with fortified wines, spirits
- Rich, custard like texture



Any Questions?