Focaccia with Red Onions & Rosemary and a Biga (Starter)
Recipe Adapted from: Focaccia, Simple Breads from the Italian Oven by Carol Field
Melissa Schenker/Foodie for Two

Cooking Time: 24 hours for biga, 4 to 4½ hours for focaccia rising and baking
Makes one loaf, approx. 12” x 9”

Ingredients:

**Biga**
2 tablespoons, plus 1 cup, 2 tablespoons warm water
1/8 teaspoon active dry yeast
1 ½ cups plus 1/3 cup flour

**Dough**
3/8 teaspoon active dry yeast
¾ cup warm water
3 tablespoons plus 1 ¼ teaspoons biga
1¼ tablespoon olive oil
1¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons flour
¾ teaspoon kosher salt

**Topping**
Extra Virgin Olive Oil
½ red onion, very thinly sliced (sautéed)
1 sprig rosemary, leaves removed and roughly chopped
Kosher salt

Directions:

**Biga**: Needs to proof for 24 hours.
Add 2 tablespoons of the warm water to a large glass bowl and sprinkle the yeast over. Stir lightly and let sit for 10 to 15 minutes until creamy. Add the remaining warm water and the flour; mix well with a rubber spatula or spoon. Mixture will be wet and sticky. Cover with plastic wrap and let sit on counter for 24 hours, until thick and bubbly.

Biga will last for up to 5 days, refrigerated. Tip: portion out biga into Ziploc bags, freeze and use when needed; allow a few hours to defrost, or place in refrigerator to defrost overnight.

**Dough**: Can be made by hand or with an upright mixer (#2 speed) and dough hook. To rise the dough in a warm environment, heat the oven to 200º and turn off when it reaches temperature.

Add the warm water to a large bowl and sprinkle the yeast over; lightly mix together and let sit for 10 to 15 minutes until creamy. Add the biga and olive oil and mix. Add the flour and salt and knead or mix together for about 5 minutes until dough is velvety and soft, not sticky. Place the dough ball in a well-oiled bowl, cover with plastic wrap and place a clean kitchen towel (folded in half) on top. Let rise for 1½ to 2 hours, in warm oven, until dough has doubled in size.

Reheat the oven to 200º and turn off. Grease a quarter sheet pan, or roughly 12” x 9” baking dish, and press dough into pan. Start in the middle and with your hands flat, gently press and stretch the dough to fit the pan size. Let rise for another 1½ hours until doubled in volume.

While the dough is rising for the second time, sauté the red onions; to a small skillet, add 1 teaspoon olive over medium heat. Add the sliced onions along with a pinch of salt and cook until they are just soft and translucent, about 5 minutes. Let cool.

After the second rise, dimple the dough surface with your finger tips or knuckles, drizzle with a generous amount of good olive oil, sprinkle the chopped rosemary over top, the sautéed onions - spreading out evenly and sprinkle with a good pinch of kosher salt. Cover sheet pan with plastic wrap and folded kitchen towel and let rise for 30 minutes.

If you have a pizza stone, place it on the middle rack and heat oven to 425º. Place the sheet pan on the pizza stone or oven rack and cook for 5 minutes. Reduce heat to 400º and cook for 20 to 25 minutes more until lightly golden. Serve warm with extra virgin olive oil and a sprinkle of salt.

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