

Focaccia Bread

FROM 100 MILE BAKERY

Leda Hermecz (pronounced Hermets) put a lot of thought into the name of her eatery. By calling it “100 Mile Bakery,” her intention was clear right from the start: She uses local ingredients. And not just local — as the name suggests, everything she uses in her food comes from within 100 miles of her kitchen at Marketplace@Sprout! in Springfield. The fresh and local ingredients don’t need much manipulating to taste good. “They speak for themselves,” she says. “I chose this recipe because it’s easy enough that anybody can do it, and it tastes great. And it does have a lot of garlic in it, which never hurts!”

Hermecz was 12 when her mother went back to school, and the young Leda began cooking and baking for her family. At 17, she began working at a French bakery near her home in southern Alabama. She moved to Oregon 13 years ago at the age of 22. Here she found the confluence of good food, good weather and excellent opportunities for a hardworking person who believed in what she was doing: “Keeping food in this area from start to finish,” she says.

Over time, Hermecz developed her recipes using local ingredients. Hermecz is using locally grown wheat, spelt, flax, rye, buckwheat, teff, garbanzos, lentils and pinto beans. By working closely with local

producers, she has discovered that she not only has to know how to adapt recipes to local wheat, for instance, but each wheat producer has their own type of wheat that works best in certain recipes. “I have different recipes for different millers,” she says. “Every grain miller has a different ‘normal’ for their product. Greenwillow Grains wheat is savory, thick and crunchy. Camas Country Mill wheat is softer, lighter.” Which makes it a great choice for this easy focaccia bread that is flavorful as is or can be a canvas for any toppings you like.

“Letting this dough rest for 24 hours is perfect,” Hermecz says. “After that it does dry out a little bit.” After a lot of testing, Hermecz is confident in all of her recipes, especially the gluten-free baking tricks she has up her sleeve. Pausing a moment, though, she says, “I’m still working on the 100-mile croissant!”

3 cups Camas Country Mill hard white wheat bread flour
2 cups water
1 tsp salt
1 tsp yeast
1 tbsp minced garlic
1 tbsp each chopped fresh rosemary, oregano and thyme

Get your oven hot; 425 degrees should do it. Combine all ingredients in a bowl and mix until the gluten strands start to develop. This will be apparent when a spoon pulled out of the bowl makes strings like hot mozzarella cheese on pizza.

Once the dough is mixed thoroughly, it will still be very

wet for bread dough. This is OK! Let it sit in a covered bowl for as long as you can stand to wait. The longer it sits, the better the flavor (This is an excellent time to make some dipping sauce — recipe follows). You could also make this dough a day or two ahead and keep it in the fridge. Then pull it out, let it come to room temperature and proceed to the next step.

Pour dough out on a parchment-lined pan. If you don’t have parchment paper, you can very generously oil a pan, but be warned that because of the water content in this dough it has a tendency to stick like crazy. Gently spread the dough out on the pan to your desired thickness. Let the dough rise again on the pan for about 40 minutes. This dough will rise to almost twice its unbaked thickness.

Once dough has risen a bit, bake your focaccia. If you want to be an artist, throw some olive oil, sea salt, fresh rosemary and grated hard cheese on top. Bake for 10 minutes if you want soft bread and 20 if you want crunchy bread. If you want to use this bread as a pizza base, par bake for 10 minutes, then top it with goodies and return to the oven for another 10 minutes. This bread is best straight out of the oven.

RAW TOMATO SAUCE:

7 small, extremely ripe whole tomatoes
2 cloves garlic, minced
8 leaves basil
leaves from 1 small stem of oregano
pinch of sea salt

Throw everything in a blender. Make sure top is secure. Blend! Salt to taste. Note: This recipe is only good with fresh, in-season extremely ripe tomatoes.



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