



Italian

PURPLE POTATO FOCACCIA



A common offering in many regions of Italy, this crusty flatbread is adorned simply with thin-sliced potatoes (purple here for a more dramatic presentation) and drizzled with olive oil, then baked. Fresh herbs are fair game as a topping; I used two headstrong herbs, rosemary and mint, effectively nullifying their individual assertiveness, to create a fine balance of tastes. **SERVES 8**

1 package (2¼ teaspoons) instant yeast

About 1¼ cups warm tap water

1 tablespoon unrefined granulated sugar (such as Sugar in the Raw)

2 teaspoons coarse sea or kosher salt, plus extra for sprinkling

3 cups bread flour or unbleached all-purpose flour, plus extra for dusting

Olive oil, for drizzling

½ pound purple potatoes

2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh rosemary leaves

2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh mint leaves

1 teaspoon coarsely cracked black peppercorns

1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

Cornmeal, for dusting

1. Stir the yeast into ¼ cup of the water (I do this in a glass measuring cup). Allow it to sit

SMASHED
MASHED
BAKED
BOILED
FRIED
SHREDDED
ROASTED
RICED

“Happy is the man who has a good wife, but I tell you happy is a man who has a south-facing slope where he can grow his own potatoes.”

—Anonymous



TATER TIP

▲ Pizza paddles and stones are an inexpensive investment, and make the pizza process a whole lot easier. Definitely consider buying them, especially if you think you'll be adding homemade pizzas to your dinner repertoire (a very good idea!).

for 10 to 15 minutes as the yeast activates. Stir in the sugar and salt.

2. Pour the flour into a food processor. (Alternatively you can use a stand mixer with a dough hook.) Dribble in the yeasty liquid and the remaining 1 cup warm water through the chute. Pulse the machine to incorporate the liquid into the flour and fashion a soft dough. If it's too sticky, add a little more flour. You don't want it too dry, either. Soft and pliable is what you are going for.

3. Lightly dust a clean countertop with flour from a shaker (see Tater Tips, page 000). Transfer the dough onto the counter and knead to smooth out the dough and create the gluten that gives the crust its chewiness and structure, 3 to 5 minutes. Drizzle a little oil into a bowl large enough to allow the dough to double in volume, and spread the oil around the inside. Gather up the dough and place it in the bowl. Spread a tablespoon of the olive oil over the dough. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and place it in a warm spot.

4. As the dough rises, prepare the topping. Fill a large bowl with cold water. Peel the potatoes and give them a good rinse under

running water. Thinly slice them with a mandoline or chef's knife to 1/8 inch thick. Place the slices in the bowl of water to rinse off excess surface starch. Combine the rosemary, mint, black peppercorns, and red pepper flakes in a small bowl.

5. Once the dough has doubled in volume, about 2 hours, position an oven rack in the lower third of the oven. Place a pizza stone or inverted cookie sheet on the rack and preheat the oven to 550°F.

6. The punch down the dough with your fist. Lightly dust the counter with flour and turn out the dough onto it. Roll it out to a circle 10 to 12 inches in diameter. Liberally sprinkle a pizza paddle or another inverted cookie sheet with cornmeal and place the dough on it.

7. Lay out a clean cotton kitchen towel or several layers of paper towels on the counter, for drying the potatoes. Drain the potato slices in a colander and give them a good rinse under cold running water. Give the colander a gentle shake or two to rid the potatoes of excess water. Transfer the potatoes to the towel and blot them dry.

8. Arrange the slices on the rolled-out dough in a single layer. Top them off with the herbaceous blend. Drizzle another tablespoon or two of olive oil on top of all that.

9. Slide the focaccia from the paddle onto the heated pizza stone or heated cookie sheet. Bake until the potato slices look slightly crispy around the edges and the crust is reddish brown, 15 to 20 minutes.

10. Remove the focaccia from the oven, sprinkle with a little salt, and cut it into wedges. I love it piping hot out of the oven, but if you plan on eating it at room temperature later, transfer the focaccia to a wire rack to cool so the crust does not get soggy.

