

PITA BREAD

Once you've had homemade Pita bread you will be hooked for life. Yes, it's more work than buying them at a store, but the results are worth it! These Pita's are great with hummus, to use as a flatbread, or to use as Pita pockets to stuff with the filling of your choice. The key to getting these Pita's to puff up like a balloon (which makes the pocket) is steam, caused by a very moist dough, so don't be afraid if your dough is a bit sticky. These can be made with only white flour if you like, and they are great, but when they are made with some whole wheat flour they are even better!

INGREDIENTS:

For white flour only:

1 ¼ Cups Water
1 Package Yeast (1/2 Tablespoon)
3 Cups plus 3 Tablespoons Flour, 16 ounces
2 teaspoons Salt
2 Tablespoons Olive Oil

For Whole Wheat Pita's:

1 ½ Cups Water
1 Package Yeast (1/2 Tablespoon)
1 ½ Cups Whole Wheat Flour, finely ground
1 ½ Cups White Flour or enough to make a total of 16 ounces
2 teaspoons Salt
2 Tablespoons Olive Oil

NOTE Place 2 Cups whole wheat flour into a food processor or blender for at least 5 minutes to break the bran into smaller particles. This makes a better texture for the finished product, but it also helps the dough to rise. The bran pieces, under a microscope, look like saw blades, and as the dough is trying to rise, these sharp edges cut the gluten membranes releasing the carbon dioxide which is trying to make your dough rise!

INSTRUCTIONS:

Measure out the 1 ½ cups of prepared wheat flour, then add white flour to make 16 ounces.

In the bowl of a stand mixer using a dough hook, combine all ingredients on low speed until incorporated, then speed up to 4 (out of 10 on a KitchenAid) and knead for 10 minutes. The dough should clean the bowl, be very soft and smooth, and just a little sticky to the touch. Add a little flour or water as necessary.

Remove the dough from the mixing bowl, spray the bowl with oil, and return dough to the bowl. Press the dough down and lightly spray with oil, then cover tightly with plastic wrap. Place in a warm place to rise, or if you are planning on using it within the next few days the dough can be refrigerated for up to a week! (After the first 4-6 hours, punch down the dough)

Cut the dough into 8 pieces. Work with 1 piece at a time, and return the others to your bowl and re-cover to keep the dough from drying out.

On a lightly floured surface with lightly floured hands, shape each piece into a ball, then flatten it into a disc. Cover the dough with oiled plastic and allow it to rest for 20 minutes.

With a rolling pin, flatten each disc into a circle (or at least close to it) about 6 inches in diameter. Allow them to rest, uncovered for 10 minutes before cooking.

To Cook:

Preheat a griddle or cast iron skillet over medium-high heat. If you don't have either, use your heaviest frying pan. Lightly grease the skillet and cook the pita's one at a time.

Cook for about 20 seconds (use a timer!), then turn the pita over and continue cooking for 1 minute or until large bubbles appear. Turn the pita over again and cook until the pita balloons, then transfer to a clean towel to stay soft and warm. If the dough begins to brown reduce the heat a bit. The entire process should take about 2 ½ - 3 minutes.

If the pita's don't balloon it's probably because there was not enough moisture in the dough. Make a note of this for future attempts, but they will still taste great!