

Pita Breads – with natural yeast (sourdough)

Makes 8/16/24

This recipe is easy to ramp up and it makes sense to do this for two reasons: the dough keeps well in the fridge so you can keep a batch to make fresh breads on demand. If you don't want to do that, make a huge batch: they freeze and reheat well.

Ingredients

	unit	1x	2x	3x
Active sourdough starter	g	226	452	678
Warm water	ml	226	452	678
Bread flour	g	390 (210 + 179)	780 (420 + 358)	1170 (630 + 537)
Olive oil	ml	30	60	90
Sugar	ml	15	30	45
Salt	tsp	1,5	3	4,5

What to do

1. In a large bowl, combine the starter, water, and 210g of the flour. Mix (I use a mixer) until it forms a thick batter. Cover and set aside for half an hour to an hour.
2. Add the olive oil, sugar and salt. Mix to combine. I add the olive oil first, then some of the flour and salt and then the balance of the flour and the sugar, mixing it to a soft dough.
3. With the mixer running on low, mix until the dough begins to clean the bottom of the bowl and form a ball around the hook.
If you're working by hand, gradually stir in the flour until you can no longer stir, then turn the mixture onto a floured surface to finish by hand.
4. Knead for 5 minutes until the dough forms into a smooth ball.
5. Put the dough into a lightly oiled bowl, turning once to coat the dough. Cover and set aside at room temperature for half an hour to an hour.
6. After it's rested, uncover and lift one side of the dough and fold it into the middle of the dough. Do this with the other three sides of the dough then turn it over to ensure even distribution of the yeast. Cover and leave for another half an hour to an hour.



7. Repeat and then leave the covered bowl for another hour - the dough should be lively, elastic and airy. If the dough is still heavy, give it another hour or two at room temperature.
8. Cover the bowl tightly and put it in the fridge overnight or for 2-3 days.¹ When you're ready to make your pitas, take the dough out of the fridge and let the dough to come to room temperature.
9. Preheat the oven to 240 °C. If you have a baking steel put it into the oven to heat. If not, put a baking sheet in oven to preheat. (Dark baking sheets work best because they absorb heat better and the bread will bake faster and puff better).
10. Divide a single batch of dough into 8 equal pieces (around 110g) and roll each into a ball and leave to rest for 10 minutes.
11. Use a rolling pin to roll two pitas to 1cm thick and roughly 15cm around. If the dough springs back too much, let your little rounds rest for 5 minutes and roll again.
12. Put each round on your preheated baking stone or baking sheet and into the oven. Bake until they puff up and the bottom is nicely browned, about 3-5 minutes.² Don't turn the breads. Wrapped the baked pitas in a clean kitchen towel while you roll and bake the other pitas.
13. Eat the pitas the day they are made when they are best. They also freeze very well.

Notes:

1. At this point, you can either make your pita breads or cover the dough tightly and refrigerate. You can keep the dough for 2 – 3 days, taking off what you need, as and when, allowing the dough to reach room temperature before working it.
2. In my gas oven, the perfect time is 6 – 7 minutes.

