



## Joe Pastry's Pita Bread

*BAH Note: I added a step to JP's recipe. One of the recipes I had previously tried called for a rest before the dough is kneaded. Cook's Illustrated called it autolysis. They said, "In autolysis, the dough is mixed and then allowed to rest for 20 minutes before it is kneaded. As the dough autolyzes (rests), enzymes naturally present in wheat act like scissors, cutting the balled-up proteins into smaller segments that are easier to straighten during kneading. This is why dough that has undergone autolysis requires much less kneading than freshly made dough. In addition, the more water there is, the more efficiently the cut-and-link process takes place. All you need is extra time and moisture, and chemistry will do the work for you." I say, if you have an extra 20 minutes or so, you might want to consider letting the Food Science Fairy do its thing.*

- 16 ounces unbleached all purpose flour (can substitute whole wheat flour for up to 8 ounces, if desired)
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 teaspoons instant yeast
- 2 1/4 teaspoons sugar
- 2 tablespoons (1 ounce) olive oil or vegetable oil
- 1 1/4 cups (10.5 ounces) lukewarm water

Combine all the dry ingredients plus olive oil in the bowl of a mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, and stir on low to combine. Add the water and continue stirring for about 30 seconds, until all the ingredients are moist. Switch to a dough hook and knead until the dough is smooth and elastic, 5 to 7 minutes. Let rise in an oiled bowl for an hour or refrigerate the dough overnight (Pastry Joe says this results in the best flavor).

When ready to bake, remove dough from the refrigerator and let it warm for about 30 minutes. Place a rack in the lowest position in the oven and remove any other racks. Place a baking stone on the rack and heat the oven to 550 degrees. Turn the dough out of the bowl and divide it into nine, 3 ounce, pieces. Roll each portion into a ball and let them rest for 20 to 30 minutes. Roll the balls out to circles about 7 inches across and let them rest for another 10 to 20 minutes.

When ready, pick up a pita and drop it onto the baking stone. Bake until it puffs up, approximately 2 to 3 minutes, then carefully turn it over with tongs. Bake another 2 to 3 minutes or so, until the pita achieves the desired color. According to Pastry Joe, the lighter the pitas the more tender and flexible they will be. Cool completely and eat.

I individually wrapped most of the pitas in plastic wrap and wedged them into the freezer for long term storage.