



The perfect picnic snack, side, sandwich or dessert

One of the few fun, safe outings for families this summer is to picnic – and Anne Kirk, pastry chef at Little Dom’s in Los Feliz, has the perfect picnic recipe.

“I love focaccia as picnic food because of its versatility,” she says. “You can really top it with anything – salt and herbs, grated cheese, roasted vegetables, proteins like crumbled sausage or thin-sliced ham, or fruit with a sprinkling of sugar. It can be a breakfast treat, an appetizer, a sandwich bread, a not-too-sweet dessert, etc.”

At Little Dom’s, fan favorite combinations include roasted tomato with basil and fontina, sausage with herbed ricotta, rosemary with sea salt – and this strawberry with mascarpone combo. “It’s a great bread to have fun with and be creative,” says Kirk.

If you don’t have a quarter-sheet pan, you can be creative with that as well. Kirk says a cast iron pan is great, and a 9-by-13-inch cake pan or two 9-inch rounds will also work. The pan just needs to have



sides. You can substitute all-purpose flour for the bread flour if you leave out a few tablespoons of water, or use whole-wheat flour by adding an extra tablespoon or two of water.

If you’re new to baking yeast breads, this

is a great one to start with because there’s no kneading or fussy shaping. Pay attention, though, to the temperature of the water you use. It should be lukewarm and feel about like body temperature. Water that’s too hot will kill your yeast, and water that’s too cold won’t activate it.

The dough can be made up to two days ahead as long as you keep it in the refrigerator (extending the overnight proof and developing the flavor). Or you can skip the overnight proof and leave the dough covered at room temperature for 90 minutes to 2 hours, until it has doubled in size, then proceed with the recipe.

Once you’ve got the dough spread out in the pan and dimpled for the final rise, Kirk has one more piece of advice: “Don’t skimp on olive oil!” she says. “Those dimples exist to be filled with oil, especially if you’re not adding a lot of toppings.”

Focaccia is best the day it’s baked, but you can keep leftovers overnight stored in an air-tight container.

Focaccia with Strawberries and Mascarpone from Little Dom’s

Focaccia dough:

- 8 grams fresh yeast or 1¼ teaspoons active dry yeast
- 300 grams (1⅓ cups) lukewarm water
- 450 grams (3¾ cups) bread flour
- 20 grams (1 tablespoon) salt
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

Toppings:

- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 basket strawberries, hulled and halved
- ¾ cup mascarpone cheese
- ⅓ cup sugar

In the bowl of a stand mixer, dissolve the yeast in the lukewarm water. Add the flour, salt and 1 tablespoon of olive oil. With the hook attachment, mix on low speed for a few minutes until smooth. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and place in the refrigerator to cold proof

overnight.

The next morning, spread ¼ cup of olive oil in a quarter-sheet pan to coat the sides and bottom. There should be oil pooled on the bottom of the pan. Remove the dough from the refrigerator and scrape it out of bowl and onto the prepped pan. Let it sit for a few minutes to warm up.

Wet your fingers and dimple the dough, working it out to the edges of the pan. If your dough is resisting, let it rest for 10 minutes or so and try again. Sprinkle the dimpled dough with some of the remaining olive oil and let it proof until it reaches near the top of the pan, about an hour. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

When the dough is fully proofed, sprinkle the remaining olive oil on top. Dot the mascarpone around the top and

follow with the strawberries. Sprinkle the top with 1/3 cup sugar and bake for about 20 minutes, until the focaccia is a dark golden color.

Remove from the oven and transfer to a cooling rack. Let the focaccia sit for a few minutes to cool and set. When you can easily remove the focaccia from the pan (a large spatula or pancake flipper is ideal), transfer it to the cooling rack so the bottom doesn’t get soggy.

When the focaccia is completely cool, cut it into squares and pack for your picnic! ♦

