

Irini Tzortzoglou's olive and rosemary bread

INGREDIENTS

2tsp dried active yeast
A pinch of caster sugar
300ml warm water
500g plain flour
100ml extra virgin olive oil
30g stoned Kalamata olives
Tips from a few fresh rosemary sprigs
Fleur de sel and extra virgin olive oil, for sprinkling

METHOD

1 In a bowl, mix the yeast and sugar with the warm water. Cover and put in a warm place for about 15 minutes, or until you see bubbles on the surface.

2 Place the flour, olive oil and a pinch of salt in the bowl of a stand mixer and add the yeast liquid. Using the dough hook, knead the dough for five minutes at a medium speed. Alternatively,



knead the dough by hand on a floured surface for about 20 minutes, until it is shiny and elastic.

3 Place the dough in a clean bowl with just a little oil, cover the bowl with cling film, then a dry tea

towel, and leave in a warm place for roughly one hour, until it has risen to double its original size.

4 Knead gently again, then shape into a flat piece about 2cm deep and place it on a baking tray lined with baking parchment or a silicone baking mat.

5 Gently push the olives and rosemary tips into the dough, sprinkle with a little fleur de sel and extra virgin olive oil, cover with a slightly dampened tea towel, and leave for 30-60 minutes for it to rise some more.

6 Preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F/gas 6. Put the bread into the oven and bake for about 30-40 minutes. Remove when it is golden in colour and hollow when you tap it underneath.

● Under The Olive Tree: Recipes From My Greek Kitchen by Irini Tzortzoglou is published by Headline, priced £25

Expand your weekend baking repertoire with this recipe, from MasterChef champ Irini Tzortzoglou.

Greek food often involves a lot of delicious sauces, and you need delicious bread to mop it all up and this recipe is easy and requires few ingredients.

“When using yeast, the water used to dissolve it should not be too hot, as this will kill the bacteria in the yeast,” Irini advises.

“The pinch of sugar is not needed for flavour but as a ‘feeding’ agent for the yeast.”

Irini was the winner of the first all-female final of BBC’s MasterChef when she lifted the trophy last year. The 60-year-old, who hails from a tiny village in Crete, impressed judges John Torode and Gregg Wallace with her sophisticated, modern take on traditional Greek fare.

