

Tante Marie's Cooking School



June 15, 1999

A new favorite restaurant of mine is Mazzini in Berkeley — a small, comfortable Italian-style restaurant with excellent food. Here is my version of a pizza they offer at this time of year. Of course, theirs is cooked in a wood-burning pizza oven.

Tante Marie's Asparagus Pizza with Fontina and Truffle Oil

Ingredients

1 pkg. dry active yeast
 1/2 cup warm water (110 to 115 degrees)
 4 to 5 cups flour
 3 Tbs. rye flour
 1-1/2 tsp. salt
 1-2/3 cups warm water
 3 Tbs. olive oil
 cornmeal
 1/2 lb. fontina, or Monterey Jack cheese, grated
 1/2 lb. fresh asparagus
 1/4 cup good quality Parmesan, grated
 1 Tbs. white truffle oil



Instructions

To make the dough, in a small warmed bowl dissolve the yeast in the 1/2 cup water. Stir in a 1/2 cup flour, cover and let rest for 10-15 minutes until bubbles form on the surface. Meanwhile place in a larger bowl the remaining flour with the rye flour and the 1-1/2 tsp. salt. Make a well in the center and add the yeast mixture with the remaining warm water and the 3 Tbs. olive oil. Mix well and knead until the dough is smooth, adding more flour if necessary. Place the dough in a lightly oiled bowl and turn over in order to coat the top of the dough. Cover and put in a warm place for at least 1-1/2 hours. The dough will remain usable at least all day if kept cool, and more if refrigerated after the first rising. If you do not refrigerate the dough, allow at least one hour for it to come to room temperature.



Bring a medium size pan of water to a boil over high heat, and cut the asparagus into 1/4 inch slices, discarding the tough stems. When the water is boiling, add 1 Tbs. salt and the asparagus. Cook for 3 minutes until the asparagus is tender. Drain and refresh the asparagus under cold water.



Place a large baking tile on the bottom shelf of an oven, or line the oven with bricks or quarry tiles. Preheat the oven to 500 degrees 30 minutes before baking.

Punch down the dough and place on a lightly floured wooden board or counter. Cut into 6 equal pieces. Cover the dough you are not working with a bowl or a dry towel. With your hands shape one of the pieces of dough into a round disc. Then roll it flatter with a rolling pin. Place this on a pizza peel covered with 1 Tbs. cornmeal, and stretch into a thin round with your fingers. Cover with one sixth of the fontina cheese, then one sixth of the asparagus, then one sixth of the Parmesan.

To bake, make sure the pizza can be moved from the peel, then place it in the oven and bake for 15 to 20 minutes until it is lightly browned on the bottom. Remove from the oven and sprinkle with the truffle oil and serve.

Serves 6.

Notes

Some people paint the perimeter of the baked pizza with olive oil when it comes out of the oven to make it shine.

Also: an alternative is to spread fontina or other soft white cheese on the pizza to bake, then cover with small arugula leaves and dot with sheep's ricotta before serving.