

# Star Bread with Feta, Ricotta and Mint

© Janet Fletcher / Planet Cheese

[www.janetfletcher.com](http://www.janetfletcher.com)

Ever since my husband, home baker extraordinaire, made a star bread with raspberry jam—gorgeous on the first try—I’ve wanted to make one with cheese. The filling is feta mixed with ricotta and a pinch of dried spearmint. If you want to impress the heck out of people at your Easter table, here’s your recipe.

## Ingredients

### Dough:

- 2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour, plus a little more for kneading
- 1 cup whole-wheat flour
- 1-3/4 teaspoons kosher or sea salt
- 1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons warm water (105°F to 115°F)
- Pinch sugar
- 1-1/2 teaspoons active dry yeast
- 3/4 cup buttermilk
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly



© Planet Cheese Photography

### Filling:

- 6 ounces Greek or French feta, at room temperature
- 3 ounces (about 1/3 cup mounded) whole-milk ricotta
- 1/4 teaspoon dried spearmint, optional

### Egg wash:

- 1 large egg beaten with 1 teaspoon water
- 1 tablespoon sesame seeds

## Directions

In a large bowl, whisk together the flours and salt until well blended.

Put the water and sugar in a small bowl and sprinkle the yeast on top. Let soften for 1 minute, then whisk with a fork to dissolve. Let stand until bubbly, about 10 minutes.

In a small saucepan over low heat, warm the buttermilk just enough to take the chill off. It may thicken like yogurt but don't worry.

Add the yeast mixture, buttermilk and melted butter to the flour and stir with a wooden spoon until the dough becomes too stiff to stir. Replace the spoon with your hand and

knead/gather the dough in the bowl until it holds together in a shaggy mass. Turn it out onto a lightly floured work surface and knead until smooth, dusting with flour as needed to keep it from sticking.

Shape the dough into a ball and place it in a large bowl lightly coated with olive oil. Turn to film the dough with the oil. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and let rise until doubled, about 1-1/2 hours.

Turn the dough out onto a work surface and divide it into four equal pieces. Shape each piece into a ball, cover loosely with a clean dishtowel and let rest 15 minutes.

Prepare the filling: In a bowl, mash the feta, ricotta and mint (if using) with a fork until well-blended and nearly smooth.

Cut a piece of parchment paper to fit a 12- x 17-inch rimmed baking sheet (half sheet pan). Set the parchment paper on a work surface, not in the baking sheet.

With a rolling pin, flatten one ball of dough into a 10-inch round and transfer it to the parchment paper. Brush with the egg wash. With a table knife, spread one-third of the cheese filling evenly over the dough round, stopping 1/2 inch from the edge. Flatten another ball of dough into a 10-inch round, place it on top of the first round, brush with egg wash and spread with half of the remaining filling, stopping 1/2 inch from the edge. Repeat with another ball of dough, topping with the remaining filling. Flatten the remaining ball of dough into a 10-inch round and place it on top of the other rounds but do not brush it with egg wash yet.

Place a 2-inch-round cookie cutter or cardboard circle on top of the dough, in the center. With a sharp knife, cut this “layer cake” of dough into 16 equal pieces, stopping just short of the edge of the cookie cutter. Using both hands, pick up 2 adjacent pieces—one in each hand—and twist them away from each other, twisting a full 360 degrees. Bring the ends together and press gently to connect them. Repeat with the remaining pieces, 2 at a time, until you have worked all the way around and have eight “points” of a star. Remove the cookie cutter. With a rimless baking sheet or pizza peel, transfer the bread, still on the parchment, to the rimmed baking sheet.

Cover the bread lightly with a dish towel and let rise until puffy, about 1-1/2 hours.

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Just before baking, brush the bread all over with egg wash and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Bake until nicely browned, 23 to 25 minutes. Use a rimless baking sheet or pizza peel to transfer the bread, still on the parchment, to a rack to cool.

Serve the bread warm, not hot.

**Serves 8**