

JIM LAHEY'S NO-KNEAD STECCA BREAD

Some bread recipes ask for strong arms, a stand mixer, and plenty of kneading. This one asks mostly for patience. Jim Lahey's famous Stecca starts with a very wet, sticky dough. You stir it together quickly, leave it overnight, and the next day it becomes a bubbly, elastic dough ready to shape into four long, rustic loaves. Once baked, the stecche have a thin, crisp crust, an airy interior, and the flavor of extra-virgin olive oil and coarse sea salt.

Recipe Information

Servings	8
Yield	4 long stecca loaves
Prep Time	15 minutes
First Rise	12-18 hours
Second Rise	1-2 hours
Bake Time	15-25 minutes
Difficulty	Easy

Ingredients

- 3 cups bread flour (about 14 oz / 400 g), plus extra for dusting
- 1/2 teaspoon fine salt
- 3/4 teaspoon granulated sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon instant yeast or active dry yeast
- 1 1/2 cups cool water (about 12 fl oz / 350 ml)
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil, approximately, divided
- 3/4 teaspoon coarse sea salt
- Semolina flour or additional bread flour, for dusting

How to Make Jim's Stecca Bread

1. Mix the Dough

Place the bread flour, fine salt, sugar, and yeast in a large mixing bowl. Pour in the cool water and stir with a wooden spoon or sturdy spatula just until no dry flour remains. There is no need to knead the dough. It should look very wet, sticky, and somewhat rough.

2. Let It Rise Overnight

Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap or a lid. Leave the dough at room temperature for 12-18 hours. By the end of the rise, it should have more than doubled in size and the surface should be covered with small bubbles.

3. Fold the Dough

Generously flour your work surface. Using a dough scraper or spatula, gently ease the dough out of the bowl without pressing out all the air. With floured hands, fold the dough over itself two or three times. Shape it very gently into a loose, flattened round. Do not knead it.

4. Second Rise

Lightly brush the top with extra-virgin olive oil and sprinkle with a small amount of the coarse sea salt. Dust a clean kitchen towel generously with flour or semolina. Place the dough on the towel and loosely cover it. Allow it to rise for

another 1-2 hours, or until noticeably puffy and almost doubled.

5. Preheat the Oven

About 30 minutes before baking, preheat the oven to 500 F (260 C). Place the rack in the center of the oven. Generously brush a large rimmed baking sheet with extra-virgin olive oil.

6. Shape the Stecche

Transfer the risen dough carefully onto a floured work surface. Divide it into 4 equal pieces. Working gently so you do not deflate the air bubbles, stretch each portion into a long, narrow strip approximately the length of your baking sheet. The shape does not need to be perfect. Place the four stecche on the prepared baking sheet, leaving space between them.

7. Add Olive Oil and Sea Salt

Brush the surface generously with extra-virgin olive oil. Sprinkle with the remaining coarse sea salt.

8. Bake

Bake for 15-25 minutes, depending on your oven, until the stecche are golden and crisp. Watch them carefully during the final few minutes because the thin ends can brown quickly. Transfer the bread to a wire rack and allow it to cool for at least 10 minutes before serving.

Nonna's Tips

- **Don't add extra flour to the dough.** It is supposed to be extremely wet and sticky. The high hydration helps create large, irregular holes inside the bread.
- **Handle it gently.** Once the dough has fermented overnight, preserve as many air bubbles as possible. Stretch rather than press when shaping.
- **Give it enough time.** If the dough has not become bubbly and noticeably larger after 12 hours, give it a few more hours.
- **Use a very hot oven.** The intense heat helps produce a crisp exterior and light interior.
- **Don't chase perfect shapes.** Stecca is rustic bread, and irregular loaves are part of its character.
- **For maximum crunch,** eat the bread the same day it is baked. If the crust softens, reheat at 400 F (200 C) for 5-7 minutes.

Delicious Variations

Press any of these gently into the surface immediately before baking, then finish with a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil:

- Halved cherry tomatoes
- Pitted olives
- Thinly sliced garlic
- Fresh rosemary
- Thyme
- Caramelized onions

How to Serve Stecca Bread

- Pasta dishes
- Soups and stews
- Antipasto platters
- Prosciutto and Italian cheeses

- Fresh mozzarella and tomatoes
- Extra-virgin olive oil for dipping

It is also excellent sliced lengthwise and turned into a rustic Italian sandwich.

Nutritional Facts

Approximate values per serving, based on 8 servings.

Nutrient	Amount
Calories	240 kcal
Total Fat	7 g
Saturated Fat	1 g
Carbohydrates	38 g
Dietary Fiber	1-2 g
Sugars	1 g
Protein	5 g
Sodium	350-400 mg

Nutrition values are estimates and may vary depending on the flour and amount of olive oil and salt used.