5 Homemade Italian Bread Recipes

1. Traditional Italian Homemade Bread (Pane Casereccio)

Prep: 20 min | Rise: 2 hr 30 min | Cook: 40 min | Total: 3 hr 30 min | Servings: 10

Ingredients

• 4 cups (500 g) bread flour

• 1 1/3 cups plus 1 tbsp (330 ml) lukewarm water

• 2 tsp (7 g) instant dry yeast

• 2 tsp (10 g) fine sea salt

• 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

• Additional flour for dusting

Instructions

1. Combine flour and yeast. Add water and olive oil, mix into a rough dough, then add salt.

2. Knead on a lightly floured surface for about 10 minutes until smooth and elastic.

3. Transfer to a lightly oiled bowl, cover, and let rise for 1 1/2-2 hours, until doubled.

4. Shape into a round or oval loaf without pressing out all the air. Place on parchment and cover.

5. Let rise another 30-45 minutes. Preheat oven to 450 F (230 C) with a sturdy empty metal pan on the lower rack.

6. Score the loaf; bake on a baking sheet. Carefully pour 1 cup hot water into the lower pan to create steam. Bake 15 minutes. Reduce to 400 F (200 C) and bake another 20-25 minutes until deeply golden.

7. Cool on a wire rack for at least 45 minutes before slicing.

Nonna's Tip: For a crispier crust, cool uncovered on a rack; wrapping hot bread traps moisture.

2. Authentic Italian Ciabatta Bread

Prep: 25 min | Rise: approx. 3 hr | Cook: 25 min | Total: approx. 3 hr 50 min | Servings: 8

Ingredients

• 4 cups (500 g) bread flour

• 1 3/4 cups (420 ml) lukewarm water

• 2 tsp (7 g) instant dry yeast

• 2 tsp (10 g) fine sea salt

• 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

• Extra flour for dusting

Instructions

1. Mix flour and yeast. Add water and olive oil to form a very sticky dough; incorporate salt.

2. Cover and rest for 30 minutes.

3. With damp hands, stretch one edge of dough up and fold toward center; repeat on all four sides.

4. Perform three more sets of folds at 30-minute intervals.

5. After the last fold, cover and rise another 45-60 minutes, until visibly expanded.

6. Turn onto a generously floured surface, keeping the air in the dough. Divide into two rectangles and gently shape into ciabatta loaves.

7. Transfer onto well-floured parchment. Cover and rest 30-45 minutes.

8. Bake in a preheated 450 F (230 C) oven for 20-25 minutes, optionally adding steam, until golden and crusty.

9. Cool fully on a wire rack.

Nonna's Tip: Keep the dough wet and sticky; extra flour can reduce ciabatta's characteristic large air pockets.

3. Soft Italian Focaccia with Rosemary and Olive Oil

Prep: 20 min | Rise: 2 hr 15 min | Cook: 25 min | Total: 3 hr | Servings: 12

Ingredients

• DOUGH: 4 cups (500 g) all-purpose flour

• 1 1/2 cups (360 ml) lukewarm water

• 2 tsp (7 g) instant dry yeast

• 2 tsp (10 g) fine sea salt

• 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

• TOPPING: 3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

• 2 tbsp water

• 1 tsp flaky sea salt

• 2 sprigs fresh rosemary

Instructions

1. Mix flour, yeast, and water. Add olive oil and salt to form a soft, sticky dough.

2. Knead about 5-7 minutes by hand or with a stand mixer.

3. Cover in a lightly oiled bowl and rise 1-1 1/2 hours, until doubled.

4. Generously oil a 9 x 13-inch baking pan. Transfer dough and gently stretch to edges. Rest 10 minutes if it resists.

5. Cover and rise 40-45 minutes until puffy.

6. Press deep dimples across the surface with your fingertips.

7. Whisk topping olive oil and water together and pour over dough; add rosemary and flaky salt.

8. Bake at 425 F (220 C) for 22-25 minutes, until golden. Cool slightly before slicing.

Nonna's Tip: The olive oil pooling in the dimples helps give focaccia its characteristic flavor and crust.

4. Rustic Pugliese Bread (Pane Pugliese)

Prep: 25 min | Rise: 3 hr | Cook: 45 min | Total: 4 hr 10 min | Servings: 12

Ingredients

• 3 cups (375 g) bread flour

• 1 cup (125 g) fine durum wheat semolina flour

• 1 1/2 cups plus 1 tbsp (375 ml) lukewarm water

• 2 tsp (7 g) instant dry yeast

• 2 tsp (10 g) fine sea salt

• 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

• Semolina flour for dusting

Instructions

1. Combine bread flour, semolina flour, and yeast. Add water and olive oil, then salt.

2. Knead for 10-12 minutes until smooth, elastic, and slightly tacky.

3. Cover in a lightly oiled bowl and rise approximately 2 hours, until doubled.

4. Shape into a round loaf on a semolina-dusted surface.

5. Place seam-side up in a floured proofing basket or towel-lined bowl; cover and rest approximately 1 hour.

6. Preheat oven and a covered Dutch oven to 450 F (230 C).

7. Turn bread onto parchment, score, and transfer carefully into the hot Dutch oven. Bake covered 25 minutes.

8. Remove lid, reduce heat to 425 F (220 C), and bake 18-20 minutes more, until deeply golden. Cool completely.

Nonna's Tip: To serve, toast a thick slice, rub with ripe tomato, then drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and oregano.

5. Sicilian Semolina Bread with Sesame Seeds (Pane Siciliano)

Prep: 25 min | Rise: 2 hr 30 min | Cook: 30 min | Total: 3 hr 25 min | Servings: 10

Ingredients

• 3 cups (450 g) fine durum wheat semolina flour (semola rimacinata)

• 1/2 cup (60 g) bread flour

• 1 1/3 cups plus 1 tbsp (330 ml) lukewarm water

• 2 tsp (7 g) instant dry yeast

• 2 tsp (10 g) fine sea salt

• 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

• 1/4 cup (35 g) sesame seeds

• Water for brushing

Instructions

1. Combine semolina, bread flour, and yeast in a large bowl.

2. Add water and olive oil and mix, then incorporate salt.

3. Knead approximately 10 minutes until smooth and elastic.

4. Cover in a lightly oiled bowl and let rise about 1 1/2 hours, until doubled.

5. Divide into two portions. Roll each into a rope, arrange into a loose zigzag, and bring the end lengthwise across the top for a mafalda-inspired shape; or make two oval loaves.

6. Brush lightly with water, sprinkle generously with sesame seeds, and press gently to adhere.

7. Cover on a parchment-lined baking sheet and rise 45-60 minutes.

8. Bake at 425 F (220 C) for 25-30 minutes until golden and fully cooked. Cool on a wire rack.

Nonna's Tip: Excellent with pecorino, grilled eggplant, olives, or mortadella.