



Italian Peasant Bread

Larry Lourcey

Ingredients

Mix 8 - 10 hours before mixing
the final dough

227 g of water
¼ tsp Instant Yeast
72g All Purpose Flour
81g Whole Wheat Flour
41g Cornmeal

Final Dough

421g Biga
227g water
3g Instant yeast
490g All Purpose Flour
16g Fine sea salt

Directions

Biga

In a large mixing bowl, combine the water, instant yeast, all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, and cornmeal.

Mix with a rubber spatula to combine and then beat well.
Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Cover with plastic wrap (cling film) and let ferment at room temperature 68°-74°F (20°-23°C) for 8 to 10 hours.

Italian Peasant Bread (Final Dough)

Mixing, Kneading, and Fermenting the Dough:

Equipment Needed

Baking Linen or Canvas Baking Cloth 24" x 32" or Large Heavy Cotton Kitchen Towel
Bakers Lame or Straight Edge Razor
Large Stainless Steel Bowl or Aluminum Pan
Baking Stone 14" x 16" (Old Stone Oven Baking Stone)
¼-Sheet of Parchment Paper
Baker's Peel/Pizza Peel

Uncover the fermented biga and add the water, instant yeast, and half of the all-purpose flour.

Use a rubber spatula to mix the ingredients until thick batter forms. Beat the batter until well combined.

Add the remaining all-purpose flour and sea salt. Fold the ingredient together using the rubber spatula until the mixture becomes a shaggy mass.

Scrape off the rubber spatula with the plastic scrape. Scrape down the bowl and turn the dough onto the work surface.

Knead the ingredients for 1 minute to incorporate the ingredients. The dough will be sticky. "Do not add any flour to the work surface."

Continue to knead the dough for 6 to 8 minutes or until the dough is strong and elastic. Round the dough into a ball.

Spray a bowl with non-stick spray or oil and place the dough into the bowl. Cover with plastic wrap.

Ferment the dough for 1 hour at room temperature.

After 1 hour. Lightly flour the work surface. Uncover the dough and turn it onto the lightly flour work surface.

Fold the dough- spread the dough out into a rough square. Fold the bottom third up over the center, then the top third down, making a rectangle. Then fold the left third over the center and the right third over the center.

Place the folded dough back into the bowl and cover with plastic wrap.

Ferment the dough 1 hour.

After 1 hour. Lightly flour the work surface. Uncover the dough and turn it onto the lightly flour work surface.

Degas and fold the edges of the dough to the center to start to form the dough into a round shape.

Clear the work surface of the flour. Turn the dough over and continue to pre-shape the dough into a tight round. The seam will be on the bottom.

Cover the dough with the bowl and let the dough rest for 15 minutes before the final shaping.

Pre-heat the oven and baking stone to 500°F (260°C) for at least 1 hour before baking the loaf.

Final Shaping and Proofing the Dough:

After the 15-minute rest uncover the dough. Lightly flour the top of the round and turn the dough over onto the work surface with the seam side up.

De-gas and shape the dough into an oval.

Shape the dough into “Batard” (loaf shape)

Lightly flour the canvas baking cloth.

Place the Batard seam side up onto the floured canvas and fold each side to cover the ends of the loaf first. Then fold the remaining canvas to enclose the Batard. This will keep the loaf from spreading while it is proofing.

Proof the loaf for 50 minutes to a 1 hour at room temperature. Check to see if the dough is ready by the touch test. Lightly press the dough with your fingertip. The dough should hold the indentation if the dough should push back completely let it continue to proof until it holds an indentation from your finger.

Place the parchment paper onto the baking peel.

Uncover the proofed loaf and place it seam side down onto the ¼-sheet of parchment paper.

Use a straight edge razor or sharp knife to cut a long slash from end to end of the loaf.

Slide the loaf onto the 500°F (260°C) preheated oven onto the baking stone. Place the large stainless steel bowl over the loaf.

Bake the loaf with the bowl over it for 10 minutes.

After 10 minutes, remove the bowl using tongs and kitchen hot pads.

Reduce the oven temperature to 450°F (232°C).

Continue to bake the loaf for 20 to 25 more minutes or until the exterior of the loaf is a deep golden brown. Turn the loaf to get even browning and remove the parchment paper.

Using the peel. Remove the baked Italian Peasant Bread from the oven.

Place the baked Italian Peasant Bread onto a cooling rack and cool completely to room temperature before cutting.

Notes

This is one of my all-time favorite bread recipes, which I got from justonebiteplease.com.

It is fairly simple to make, you just have to remember to start the day before!

Here's an interesting piece of trivia. This bread is considered a batard, meaning it's shaped like a football. Batard is the French word for 'bastard'. Early French bakers only shaped their bread into baguette or boule (round) shapes.