

# Rustic Italian Bread 90

! Love this recipe? Members get every recipe, rating, and video. **Go All Access**

DESSERTS OR BAKED GOODS

ITALIAN

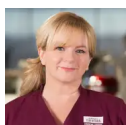
BREADS

**SERVES** Makes 1 large loaf, about 2 1/2 pounds



## WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS

For a rustic Italian bread recipe with a chewy but tender crumb, crusty but not tough, we used bread flour, which gave our bread height and a thick crust. Biga (a traditional Italian pre-ferment) mixed the day before gave the bread a wheaty... [Read More](#)



## TRY THIS RECOMMENDED COOKING COURSE

Rustic Italian Breads

## GATHER YOUR INGREDIENTS

*Biga*

☐ 11 ounces bread flour (2 cups)

- ☐ ¼ teaspoon instant yeast
- ☐ 8 ounces water (1 cup), room temperature

### *Dough*

- ☐ 16 ½ ounces bread flour (3 cups), plus extra for dusting hands and work surface
- ☐ 1 teaspoon instant yeast
- ☐ 10.7 ounces water (1 1/3 cups), room temperature
- ☐ 2 teaspoons table salt

---

**View Nutritional Information** [i](#)

---

\*

## **BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

---

This recipe requires a standing mixer to make the dough, a spray-bottle filled with water for spritzing, a rectangular baking stone, and an instant-read thermometer for gauging doneness. It also requires a bit of patience—the biga, which gives the bread flavor, must be made 11 to 27 hours before the dough is made.

1

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

---

For the biga: Combine flour, yeast, and water in bowl of standing mixer fitted with dough hook. Knead on lowest speed (stir on KitchenAid) until it forms a shaggy dough, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer biga to medium bowl, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and let stand at room temperature until beginning to bubble and rise, about 3 hours. Refrigerate biga at least 8 hours or up to 24 hours.

2

---

For the dough: Remove biga from refrigerator and let stand at room temperature while making dough. Combine flour, yeast, and water in bowl of standing mixer fitted with dough hook; knead on lowest speed until rough dough is formed, about 3 minutes. Turn mixer off and, without removing dough hook or bowl from mixer, cover bowl loosely with plastic wrap; let dough rest 20 minutes.

Remove plastic wrap, add biga and salt to bowl, and continue to knead on lowest speed until ingredients are incorporated and dough is formed (dough should clear sides of bowl but stick to very bottom), about 4 minutes. Increase mixer speed to low (speed 2 on KitchenAid) and continue to knead until dough forms a more cohesive ball, about 1 minute. Transfer dough to large bowl (at least 3 times dough's size) and cover tightly with plastic wrap. Let dough rise in cool, draft-free spot away from direct sunlight, until slightly risen and puffy, about 1 hour.

Remove plastic wrap and, following illustrations from "Step by Step: Turning the Dough", turn dough. Replace plastic wrap; let dough rise 1 hour. Turn dough again, replace plastic wrap, and let dough rise 1 hour longer.

To shape the dough: Dust work surface liberally with flour. Gently scrape and invert dough out of bowl onto work surface (side of dough that was against bowl should now be facing up). Dust dough and hands liberally with flour and, using minimal pressure, push dough into rough 8- to 10-inch square. Following illustrations from "Step by Step: Shaping the Loaf", shape dough and transfer to large sheet parchment paper. Dust loaf liberally with flour and cover loosely with plastic wrap; let loaf rise until doubled in size, about 1 hour. Meanwhile, adjust oven rack to lower-middle position, place baking stone on rack, and heat oven to 500 degrees.

To bake: Using a lame, single-edged razor blade, or sharp chef's knife, cut slit 1/2 inch deep lengthwise along top of loaf, starting and stopping about 1 1/2 inches from ends; spray loaf lightly with water. Slide parchment sheet with loaf onto baker's peel or upside-down baking sheet, then slide parchment with loaf onto hot baking stone in oven. Bake 10 minutes, then reduce oven temperature to 400 degrees and quickly spin loaf around using edges of parchment; continue to bake until deep golden brown and instant-read thermometer inserted into center of loaf registers 210 degrees, about 35 minutes longer. Transfer to wire rack, discard parchment, and cool loaf to room temperature, about 2 hours.

Turning the Dough *i*

Shaping the Loaf *i*

Recipe developed for the January / February 2003 issue.

Every issue contains reliable recipes that deliver confidence. Get a free trial issue.

## RECOMMENDED READING

### MORE FROM COOK'S ILLUSTRATED



Whole-Wheat Rustic Italian ...

Yeast Types

Rating Free-Standing Mixers...

Hearth Kit

Get the dough rolling with standout flavors and surefire results

SAVE 14%



### ON SALE IN OUR SHOP



**20th Anniversary Cookbook**  
*The Best-Ever from America's Kitchen*



**How to Cook Cocktails**  
*Get the Kitchen Treats*



**Air Fryer Perfection**  
*What to Buy & How to Use It*

## 90 COMMENTS

### Try All-Access Membership to Unlock the Comments

Don't miss the conversation. Our test cooks and editors jump in to answer your questions, and our members are curious, opinionated, and respectful.

**Membership includes instant access to everything on our sites:**

- **10,000+ foolproof recipes** and why they work
- **Taste Tests** of supermarket ingredients
- **Equipment Reviews** save you money and time
- **Videos** including full episodes and clips
- **Live Q&A** with Test Kitchen experts

START FREE TRIAL