

## Prosciutto Ring

I cannot tell you how many times I have stopped at my neighborhood Italian bakery, Zito's, and bought one of their rings of "lard bread." Tearing off "just one more piece" as I walk home, I usually go through at least a quarter of it. I never in my wildest dreams expected to be able to get this recipe, let alone reproduce it in my home oven. But one day I dared to ask and as luck would have it, Anthony Zito, one of the owner's sons, was there. We discovered that my father was making bagel peels on the Bowery at the same time his father opened his bakery on Bleecker Street in 1924 and that our families were both old-time New Yorkers. In fact, when my aunt Ruth was first married, she lived over Zito's! To my delight, not only did Anthony describe the recipe in detail, it turned out to be sublimely simple. So much flavor comes from the prosciutto, pepperoni, sopressata, and black pepper that the bread requires no starter pre-ferment, and since it's intended to be a coarse, rustic bread, it only gets one rise. This makes it exceptionally quick to prepare. I also tried, with great success, to mix it in the food processor, which makes it even quicker and easier still, but it works equally well with every method, so I have listed them all, as each is slightly different. Sadly, Zito's is now closed, but the bread can still be purchased at Parisi Bakery on Mott Street. They call it by its original name: Lard Bread. Parisi shared another important secret with me that makes all the difference: In addition to the prosciutto, they also add pepperoni and hot sopressata. They use the dried ends of these sausages for extra flavor intensity. They also add a little lard to the dough for both flavor and a crispier crust.

Because the texture of this bread should be chewy this is a fairly stiff dough. It will be slightly more chewy if you use half bread flour, half unbleached all-purpose. If desired, baked ham or even turkey ham can be substituted for the meat.

## TIME SCHEDULE

**Starter:** straight dough method

**Rising Time:** about 1 hour

**Oven Temperature:** 450°F, then 400°F

**Baking Time:** 30 to 35 minutes

Makes: an 8 1/2-by-2-inch-high ring/

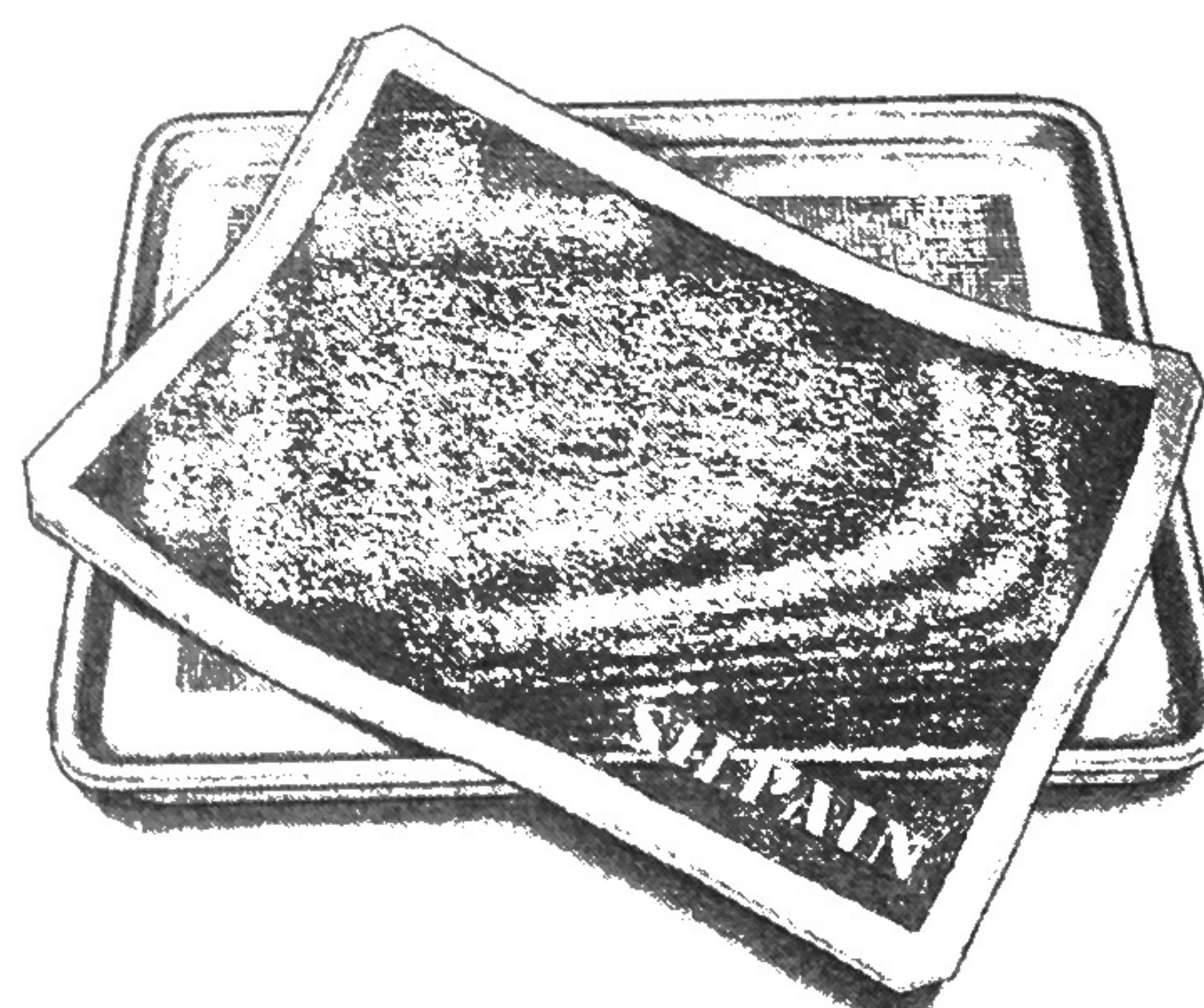
1 1/2 pounds/690 grams

INGREDIENTS	MEASURE	WEIGHT	
	volume	ounces	grams
<b>bread flour or</b>  unbleached all-purpose flour (use only Gold Medal, King Arthur, or Pillsbury)	<b>2 cups plus 3 tablespoons</b> 2 1/4 cups plus 2 tablespoons	12 ounces	340 grams
<b>malt powder or</b>  barley malt syrup or honey or sugar	<b>1 tablespoon</b> 1 tablespoon 1 tablespoon	<b>0.3 ounce</b> 0.7 ounce 0.5 ounce	<b>9.3 grams</b> 21 grams 12.5 grams
<b>instant yeast (see page 561 for brands)</b>	<b>3/4 teaspoon</b>	--	<b>2.4 grams</b>
<b>coarsely cracked black pepper</b>	<b>scant 1/2 teaspoon</b>	--	<b>0.8 gram</b>
<b>salt</b>	<b>3/4 teaspoon</b>	--	<b>5 grams</b>
<b>lard</b>	<b>2 tablespoons</b>	<b>scant 1 ounce</b>	<b>26 grams</b>
<b>water, room temperature (70° to 90°F) (or cold, if using a food processor)</b>	<b>1 liquid cup</b>	<b>8.3 ounces</b>	<b>236 grams</b>
<b>prosciutto, pepperoni, and hot sopressata sausage, sliced not too thin and cut into 1/4- to 1/2-inch pieces</b>	<b>1 1/2 cups</b>	<b>6 ounces</b>	<b>170 grams</b>

## EQUIPMENT:

a nonstick liner such as Silpain or parchment;

a baking stone OR baking sheet



1 > Mix the dough.

### *Food Processor Method*

In the bowl of a food processor fitted with the metal blade, combine the flour, malt (or honey or sugar), yeast and pepper, and process for a few seconds to mix. Then

add the salt (this keeps the yeast from coming in direct contact with the salt, which would kill it) and process again for a few seconds. With the motor running, gradually pour in the cold water and lard. Process for 45 seconds after the dough comes together. It should be slightly tacky (sticky).

Scrape the dough onto a lightly floured counter and lightly flour the dough. Press it into a rectangle and sprinkle it with the prosciutto. Roll up the dough and knead it to incorporate the meat evenly. (The dough will weigh about 1 3/4 pounds/795 grams.)

Dust the dough lightly with flour and cover it with plastic wrap. Allow it to relax for 20 minutes.

#### ***Mixer Method***

In the mixer bowl, whisk together the flour, malt (or honey or sugar), yeast, and black pepper. Then whisk in the salt (this prevents the yeast from coming into direct contact with the salt, which would kill it). With the dough hook, on low speed (#2 if using a KitchenAid), add the water and lard and mix for about 1 minute, until the flour is moistened. Knead the dough on medium speed (#4 KitchenAid) for 7 minutes.

Add the meat and mix on low speed (#2 KitchenAid) for 1 minute or until evenly incorporated. The dough should be very elastic and jump back when pressed with a fingertip. It should still be a little tacky (sticky) but not cling to your fingers. If the dough is very sticky, knead in a little flour. If it is not sticky at all, spray it with a little water and knead it in. (The dough will weigh about 1 3/4 pounds/795 grams.)

Dust the dough lightly with flour and cover it with plastic wrap. Allow it to relax for 20 minutes.

#### ***Hand Method***

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, malt (or honey or sugar), pepper, and yeast. Then whisk in the salt (this keeps the yeast from coming into direct contact with the salt, which would kill it). Add the water and lard and stir, with a wooden spoon or your hand, until the flour is moistened.

Empty the dough onto a counter and knead it for 10 minutes or until it is very elastic and jumps back when pressed with a fingertip. Knead in the meat. The dough should be a little tacky (sticky) but not cling to your fingers. If it is very sticky, knead in a little flour. (The dough will weigh about 1 3/4 pounds/795 grams.)

Dust the dough lightly with flour and cover it with plastic wrap. Allow it to relax for 20 minutes.

#### ***Bread Machine Method***

In the bread machine container, place the water, lard, salt, malt (or honey or sugar), flour, black pepper, and yeast, in that order. Put it through the dough cycle (mix 3 minutes, knead 5 minutes). Let the dough rest for 20 minutes.

**Add the meat and do a second dough cycle (mix 3 minutes, knead 5 minutes.)** The dough should be a little tacky (sticky) but not cling to your fingers. If necessary, remove it from the machine and knead in a little more flour. (The dough will weigh about 1 3/4 pounds/795 grams.)

### **All Methods**

**2 > Shape the dough and let it rise.** Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured counter, if it's not already on the counter. Roll it into an 18-inch-long rope. Shape it into a ring, overlapping ends by 2 inches, and press lightly to seal them; the ring will be about 7 inches in diameter and 1 1/4 inches high, with a 3-inch hole in the center.

Set the bread on the Silpain or parchment and cover it with a large container or oiled plastic wrap. Allow the dough to rise (ideally at 75° to 80°F) until almost doubled, about 1 hour. It will be almost 9 inches across by 1 1/2 inches high, and when it is pressed gently with a fingertip, the depression will very slowly fill in.

**3 > Preheat the oven.** Preheat the oven to 450°F 1 hour before baking. Have an oven shelf at the lowest level and place a baking stone or baking sheet on it, and a cast-iron skillet or sheet pan on the floor of the oven, before preheating.

**4 > Glaze and bake the bread.** Shortly before baking, brush the dough all over with the melted bacon fat or butter. (Do not slash the dough.) Using the Silpain liner, lift the ring onto the hot baking stone or hot baking sheet; or use a peel if it is on parchment. Toss 1/2 cup of ice cubes into the pan beneath and immediately close the door. Bake for 20 minutes. Turn down the heat to 400°F and continue baking for 10 to 15 minutes or until the bread is deep golden brown (an instant-read thermometer inserted into the center will read about 211°F). Halfway through baking, with a heavy pancake turner, lift the bread from the Silpain or parchment and set it directly on the stone, turning it around as you do so for even baking. When the bread is baked, turn off the oven, prop the door slightly ajar, and leave the bread in the oven for 5 minutes.

**5 > Glaze and cool the bread.** Remove the bread from the oven, and transfer it to a wire rack. Brush with another coat of melted bacon or butter, and cool completely. The texture of this bread is most appealing when torn rather than cut.

**STORE** This bread stays fresh for 2 days at room temperature.

### **UNDERSTANDING**

For the food processor method, using cold (or refrigerated) water at about 46°F will result in a dough of about 84°F after processing. This is a stiff dough, so it really heats

up during mixing. It cools to 79°F after kneading in the prosciutto. It is also possible to freeze the water for 5 to 10 minutes before adding it so that the initial temperature of the mixed dough is below 80°F. The cold water does not harm the yeast, because it heats up so quickly. Freezing the flour for at least 15 minutes will also help to keep the dough cooler during mixing.

#### THE DOUGH PERCENTAGE

Flour:	100%
Water:	69.4%
Yeast:	0.7%
Salt:	1.5%