

## Breads of the World: Italy - ciabatta

Presented 11/21/2017 by Sarah Newton



A loaf of ciabatta bread looks so rustic and simple that one could assume it was created by Italian monks during the Renaissance. In fact, ciabatta was invented in 1982 by a Verona miller and baker seeking a way for Italy to counteract the growing popularity of the French baguette. He used just three ingredients to make a very wet dough and a resulting chewy, holey snacking bread. Arnaldo Cavallari named it ciabatta (ciabatta means slipper) because he thought the shape resembled his wife's favorite footwear. In the intervening 35 years, ciabatta has become a favorite worldwide.

### Ciabatta

Makes four small loaves

Adapted from *How to Bake* by Paul Hollywood. This recipe does not use a traditional biga starter.

### Equipment

Stand mixer with dough hook attachment

Parchment paper

Dough cutter (aka pastry scraper)

3-to-4-quart square or rectangle plastic/nonreactive container with lid for proofing

2 baking sheets

### Ingredients

4 cups (500 grams) white bread flour, plus more for dusting

2 teaspoons (10 g) salt

2 teaspoons (10 g) instant yeast (quick-rise)

1½ to 1¾ (400-420 ml) tepid water (amount can vary just slightly)

Fine semolina flour for dusting

Olive oil

### Directions

1. Weigh or measure the flour and put it into your mixer bowl. Add the salt on one side of the bowl and the yeast on the opposite side. Add three quarters of the water and mix on slow speed.
2. As the dough comes together, slowly add the remaining water. You'll know the dough has enough liquid when it makes a slapping sound as it slides around the mixer.
3. Increase speed to medium and mix for another 5-8 minutes until the dough is smooth and stretchy. To test, stop the mixer and raise the dough hook. Does the dough stretch as it slowly slides off the hook? If it doesn't, keep mixing for another minute and try again.
4. Oil the proofing container with your hand. This dough so sticky that having an oiled hand to get it off the dough hook and out of the bowl is very helpful. Tip the dough into

the container, cover and leave until at least doubled, if not tripled, in size: 1-2 hours or longer. Along with increased volume, you know your dough is ready when the top is bumpy and full of air holes.

5. Once the dough is ready, preheat the oven to 430 degrees (220 Celsius) and line two baking sheets with parchment paper.
6. Dust the work surface liberally with flour and add some semolina. Carefully tip the dough onto the work surface. Try to maintain the square/rectangle shape.
7. Do not punch down, knock back or knead this dough. Dust the top with flour and semolina. Using the dough cutter, cut into four equal parts.
8. Using as gentle a hand as possible to retain the air inside the dough, use the dough cutter to tip each piece onto its side (cut side up, to get that classic flour line on the loaf) and gently lift it onto the parchment paper. You can stretch it a little lengthwise, but less handling the better. Repeat for all four pieces.
9. Rest for 10 minutes to let the dough recover.
10. Bake for 25 minutes or until the loaves are golden brown and sound hollow when tapped on the bottom. Cool on a wire rack.

This bread is best eaten same day or reheated the next day. The crispy beautiful crust will soften overnight. Don't be afraid to reheat it; it shouldn't dry out during a first reheat.

## **Olive Oil Dip for Italian Bread**

Source: Allrecipes.com

### **Ingredients**

1/4 cup olive oil  
5 cloves garlic  
2 Tablespoons balsamic vinegar  
2 Tablespoons Parmesan cheese  
1 Tablespoon crushed dried oregano  
Fresh ground black pepper, to taste

### **Directions**

Pour the olive oil onto a salad plate. Using a press, press the garlic cloves onto five different spots on the plate. Drizzle the balsamic vinegar over the oil and garlic. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and oregano. Season with black pepper.