

Artisan Bread, A.S.A.P.

This basic recipe makes four different types of Italian-style artisan breads in about 1-1/2 hours! – Caryn Esplin –

Add toppings to this versatile, yet simple dough to create four different Artisan breads: Sesame Batard, White Chocolate-Almond Flat Loaf, Asiago Herb Focaccia, and Cheesy Bread Sticks. Follow these tips to get a firm, crusty exterior, yet moist, tender interior: 1. Sticky dough, 2. High temperature, 3. Hot stone, and 4. Water spritz. (see directions, below). It's fun to serve the slices in a basket with dipping sauces and spreads on the side, such as marinara, cream cheese fondue, orange honey-peanut sauce, or vinegar and oil.



INGREDIENTS:

3 cups warm water (105-115 degrees)
3 T. yeast
1/2 c. sugar
6+ cups unbleached bread flour
2 T. salt
1 T. olive oil

VARIATIONS:

Artisan Wheat: Substitute half the flour for whole wheat flour.

Tasty Potato Artisan: Add 1 c. mashed potatoes and replace sugar with 1/3 c. molasses + 1/3 c. honey.

DIRECTIONS:

- 1. SPONGEYEAST:** Mix the water, yeast, and sugar in a large bowl. (I use my Kitchen Aid.) Cover and let sponge for about 5 minutes.
- 2. MIX TOGETHER:** Add the flour, salt and oil. You may need more flour, but keep the dough sticky! When dough has pulled together, knead for about two minutes. The dough is sticky enough that I use the batter beater, not the dough hook on my Kitchen Aid mixer.
- 3. RAISE 25 MIN:** Spray dough with oil, cover and raise in a warm place (100 degrees) for about 25 minutes. (Or one hour at room temperature)



- 4. PREHEAT BAKING STONE:** Place baking stone in oven and preheat to 475 degrees, which may take about 30 min.

5. FORM LOAVES: Cut pieces of parchment paper to accommodate loaf size, and place them on an upside down cookie sheet (or pizza peel). Spray parchment with oil and sprinkle with corn meal. Punch dough down and divide into thirds, then form loaves or flat bread:

A. Batard loaf: Shape dough into a rectangle, then roll into a small, french loaf. Brush loaves with beaten egg, then top with sesame seeds, oatmeal, or corn meal. Slash the loaves diagonally with sharp knife.

B. Flat loaf: Flatten dough and use flour to form a rectangle, about 1 to 1-1/2 inches thick.

C. Focaccia: Pat dough into rectangle about 1/2 inch thick. Press holes and indentations in the dough for an uneven focaccia texture.

D. Bread Sticks: Roll ropes of dough, then cut to desired length and garnish with cheese.

- 6. MIX-INS OR TOPPINGS:** Add toppings to the formed loaves, or roll them into the dough:
White Chocolate-Almond Flat Loaf: Top with white chocolate and sliced almonds. Then add honey, sugar/cinnamon and more toppings right after it comes out of the oven.

Asiago Herb Focaccia: Spray with oil, sprinkle with garlic, rosemary, parmesan, and asiago cheese.

- 7. RAISE 10 MIN:** Let raise about 15 minutes. The natural "oven spring" process will finish raising the loaves.

8. TRANSFER BREAD TO OVEN: To transfer bread to preheated oven, pull edge of parchment to slide bread carefully onto a hot baking stone. Then quickly spray oven walls and bread with a mist of water. Close oven quickly to preserve heat. Lower temperature to 450-460., depending on how hot your oven bakes.

9. BAKE 10-12 MIN. until nicely browned. Then pull an edge of the parchment to transfer bread to the cookie sheet (or pizza peel). Then cool loaves on wire racks.

10. OPTIONAL: After removing bread from the oven, add more toppings to the white chocolate bread. I like to drizzle honey, then sprinkle cinnamon sugar, and top it off with more white chocolate and sliced almonds. Oh yes!

