

Ciabatta

Ciabatta has gone from being unknown in the United States a few decades ago to being seen as the most classic of Italian breads. Ciabatta (and its cousins filoncino and pugliese) are breads with high hydration levels of over 80%. This high hydration level, along with careful dough handling, makes for a very open crumb and light loaf. The Lahey method of a slow rise with small amounts of yeast is well suited to producing high quality ciabatta with minimal effort.

The word “gently” tends to show up repeatedly in this recipe. Handle the loaves with care to help preserve as many air bubbles as possible; this will maximize the light, open crumb characteristic of ciabatta.

Two Loaves	Ingredient	One Loaf
6 cup, 816 g	Bread flour, 100%	3 cups, 408 g
½ tsp, 1.6 g	Yeast, 0.2%	¼ tsp, 0.8 g
1 Tbsp, 14 g	Kosher salt, 2%	½ Tbsp, 7 g
3 cup, 711 g	Water, at room temperature, 87%	1 ½ cups, 356 g

16-20 hours prior to baking, stir the bread flour, yeast and salt in a large bowl. Stir in the water until smooth then stir vigorously another 15-30 seconds. Cover and allow to rise at room temperature for 8-10 hours.

After the initial rise, coat a rubber spatula with nonstick cooking spray then gently fold the dough 3-4 times within the bowl. Cover and allow to rise at room temperature for another 7-9 hours.

Preheat the oven, baking stone and steam pan to 500 degrees. Spread a tablespoon of olive oil over the work surface then sprinkle the surface heavily with flour. Gently use a spatula to scoop the dough out onto the work surface. Divide the dough in half (if making two loaves), then gently pull each loaf out into a rectangle about 5 by 10 inches in size. Grab both ends of the loaf with both hands and gently flip the loaves onto a peel or baking sheet covered with parchment paper and immediately slide onto the baking stone. Turn the oven down to 475 degrees and bake for 30 minutes or until the top is golden brown. Remove to a wire rack to cool.

Ciabatta integrale: Substitute ¾ cup (one loaf) or 1 ½ cups (two loaves) whole wheat flour for the same amount of bread flour. Add an extra 1 Tbsp water (one loaf) or 2 Tbsp water (two loaves).