

Pane Casareccio

There are a few things to know before you begin:

- You will need a cast-iron dutch oven. Do not purchase an enameled one; they are not heat resistant at the high temperature required to bake this bread. We use a [5-qt. dutch oven made by Lodge](#).
- Baking bread is a two day process. You do not need to knead this dough, but you do need to let it sit overnight. We mix the dough on Saturday afternoon, and bake it on Sunday.
- Use standard, unbleached bread flour.
- Use bread machine yeast that comes in a glass jar, and store your yeast in the refrigerator.
- Weigh your flour, don't measure it.
- Acquire plastic chopping mats, pastry mats or even plastic place mats to let your loaves rise on.
- Consider making a few loaves at a time. Whatever you do not eat that same day you can slice and freeze, and pull out as needed throughout the week. Freezing is a better solution to storing in paper bags. Never store this bread in plastic bags.

Ingredients

1 and 1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon yeast
450 grams flour
1 and 1/2 cups warm water

Directions

Place the salt and the yeast into a medium-sized glass or ceramic bowl. Add the warm water, and stir until the yeast and the salt are dissolved and the water is cloudy. Measure the flour and add it to the water. With a wooden spoon, stir the flour into the water until just mixed. The dough will come together and form a ball. Don't over-stir – the consistency will be unequal with some parts more dense and other parts stickier.

Cover the bowl with plastic wrap, creating a tight, airtight seal. Let sit overnight for 12-18 hours. When you return to your dough the next day, you will see that it has risen and become a light, wet, sticky dough with air bubbles covering its surface.

The next phase of the process involves shaping your dough into loaves, and letting them rise. Lay a plastic chopping mat or pastry mat down on a work surface in a part of the kitchen where the temperature is even – not too close to the oven, and away from drafts. Sprinkle flour over the surface of the mat. Remove the plastic wrap from the bowl of dough, and set aside to be used again later. Using your fingers, pull the dough out of the bowl and onto the mat. Let it rest there for 15 minutes.

Using the extra flour on the mat to keep the dough from sticking to your hands, lift the dough and carefully work it into a round loaf shape by pulling the ends around and working them together on the underneath side. Move quickly and efficiently so as not to overwork the dough. With the dough in one hand, remove the excess flour from the mat using the other hand, and then gently set the loaf back down onto the mat. Retrieve the plastic wrap that previously covered the bowl, and place loosely over the dough, dry-side down. Let the dough rise for 2-3 more hours.

30 minutes before baking the bread, place the dutch oven into your oven, and preheat it to 475° F. You want your dutch oven to be scorching hot when you place your dough into it.

When your dough is ready and your oven has reached 475° F, remove the dutch oven, and take its lid off. Working quickly so that your dutch oven and your oven do not cool down too much, lift the entire plastic mat with the dough on it, and carefully turn the dough over into the dutch oven. Replace the lid and

using pot holders, give the dutch oven a shake or two while on your countertop in so that the dough inside settles into the center of the dutch oven.

Return the dutch oven to the oven, and bake for 30 minutes. After 30 minutes, remove the lid of the dutch oven and check the color of the bread. If it is still pale yellow, return the dutch oven to the oven uncovered for up to 5 more minutes, until the crust achieves a deep golden-brown color.

Remove the dutch oven from the oven, and turn the bread out onto the counter top immediately. Let cool on a baking rack so that the heat can escape from underneath. When no longer piping hot, slice and enjoy.