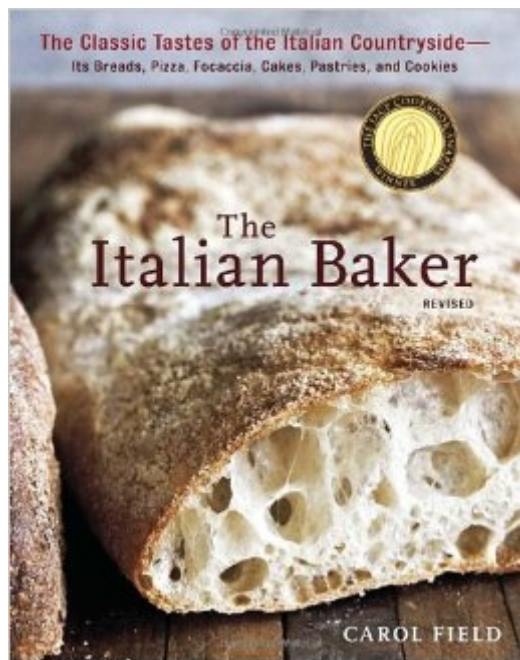


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The Italian Baker, Revised: The Classic Tastes Of The Italian Countryside--Its Breads, Pizza, Focaccia, Cakes, Pastries, And Cookies



Synopsis

Who can resist bruschetta rubbed with garlic and drizzled with olive oil, almond-studded biscotti dipped in coffee or wine, and, of course, a thin-crust pizza with fresh, sweet tomatoes and tangy mozzarella? These Italian classics that Americans know and love are just the beginning; there are a wealth of other equally delicious breads and sweets waiting to be discovered. In this groundbreaking classic now thoroughly updated for today's modern kitchen Carol Field introduces artisanal doughs and techniques used by generations of Italian bakers. Every city and hill town has its own unique baking traditions, and Field spent more than two years traversing Italy to capture the regional and local specialties, adapting them through rigorous testing in her own kitchen. Field's authentic recipes are a revelation for anyone seeking the true Italian experience. Here's a chance to make golden Altamura bread from Puglia, chewy porous loaves from Como, rosemary bread sprinkled with coarse sea salt, dark ryes from the north, simple breads studded with toasted walnuts, succulent fig bread, and Sicilian loaves topped with sesame seeds. The Italian Baker is the only comprehensive book, in English or Italian, to cover the entire range of Italian baking, from breadsticks and cornetti to focaccia, tarts, cakes, and pastries. There is even a chapter on using leftover bread with recipes ranging from hearty Tuscan bread soup to a cinnamon and lemon-scented bread pudding. Winner of the International Association of Culinary Professionals Award for best baking book, The Italian Baker was also named to the James Beard Baker's Dozen list of thirteen indispensable baking books of all time. It has inspired countless professionals and home cooks alike. This latest edition, updated for a new generation of home bakers, has added four-color photography throughout, plus new recipes, ingredients and equipment sections, source guides, and weights. One of the most revered baking books of all time, The Italian Baker is a landmark work that continues to be a must for every serious baker.

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Customer Reviews

Carol Field's new edition of "The Italian Baker" has been released following the first edition published 26 years ago. Some of the same deficiencies hobble use of the book that are carried over from the first version over a quarter-century ago. Field consistently uses too much yeast in most of her bread recipes and, accordingly, most dictated rising times, which vary between 1.25 hours with a couple as much as 3 hours, are too brief. Rustic breads, in particular, need long, cool rising times, often as much as 5 or more hours, with doughs that were assembled with about half to two-thirds less yeast than called for in Field's recipes. The result is confirmed by the breads made according to her directions from the new edition: the breads with short rising times suffer from inadequate flavor and aroma development. Also, Field often recommends additional warmth for doughs that will accelerate their ripening. This also detracts from flavor and aroma. Field knows this because, at points in the new book, she mentions that Italian bakers she is acquainted with use much longer rising times, and some of her recipes for rustic breads do indeed call for long rising times. My own guess is that Field accelerated rising times in many cases because she was doubtful that Americans would tolerate long, slow rising times to produce regional and rustic Italian breads. Field should take note that a well-known lady nearly 50 years ago emphasized the need to use small amounts of yeast, cool water, and long rising times when she documented for the first time how it is possible to make authentic pain ordinaire at home.

I usually try to be very open-minded when a cookbook doesn't have as many pics as I'd like. I tell myself that this recipe or that recipe really doesn't need a visual. But this book has such a rich array of new breads (to me anyway) that I wish there were pics to illustrate them as I am at a loss to imagine what they might look like. That deflates the balloon to get one started many times. There is a chapter in back about baked sweets (dolci) which includes biscotti, tarts, etc., then there's a section on lots of pizzas including thick Sicilian style, soups too, but for me this book was all about the breads. I have pages tagged for Olive Oil Bread, Sicilian Bread, Rosemary Bread, Five Grain Bread with walnuts, Raisin Bread, Sweet Corn Bread, Christmas Bread of Lake Como, Venetian Holiday Bread, Christmas Bread of Verona, etc...except for a few of these listed examples, I have no idea what the others should look like. The only way you would delve into an unknown bread is by

first reading the title, then the opening blurb, then reading thru the ingredient list and then the step by step instructions. Unless you are a very passionate and motivated cook or baker, you will be put off by this. A picture as they say is worth a thousand words. Here it is so true. A picture can inspire and motivate you in an instant, especially with breads that are not commonplace. When spring approaches, I will delve into the Easter breads. What I DO like very much in the layout is the way each recipe allows you to use the method of choice. For each recipe, there are three separate clearly labelled areas to find your preferred method of creating your dough: BY HAND, BY MIXER, or BY PROCESSOR. Choose the method most comfortable to you.

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