

Bread Baking 103 — Italian Casereccio & Rustic Table Bread

Overnight Cold Fermentation (12–18 hours)

A deeply flavored Italian dough made two ways: a rustic “stretch bread” (easy table bread) and a round boule baked in a Dutch oven. No kneading — time does the work.

INGREDIENTS (grams + spoons as taught)

- **750 g bread flour** (bread flour is required for lift)
- **1/3 tsp instant yeast**
- **1 Tbsp fine sea salt**
- **550–575 g cool water** (start at 550 g; add only if needed)
- **1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil**
- **1 Tbsp raw honey**

Hydration: ~73% (550 g water) up to ~77% (575 g water)

EQUIPMENT (what you used)

- Digital scale (grams)
 - Large bowl + wooden spoon
 - Bowl scraper or bench scraper (your best friend for sticky dough)
 - Bench flour (regular flour)
 - **Rice flour** for banneton (prevents sticking better than wheat flour)
 - Banneton (or bowl lined with cloth)
 - Sheet pan + parchment (flat-pack parchment behaves best)
 - Damp towel + extra towel for “cozy” proofing
 - Steam method (choose one):
 - Lava rock tray + **ice cubes**, OR
 - Preheated Dutch oven / combo cooker
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DAY 1 — MIX + FRIDGE

1) Mix (no knead)

1. In a bowl, weigh **750 g bread flour**.
2. Add **1/3 tsp instant yeast** on one side of the bowl.
3. Add **1 Tbsp fine sea salt** on the opposite side (salt + yeast aren’t best friends).

4. Add:

- **550 g cool water**
- **1 Tbsp olive oil**
- **1 Tbsp honey**

5. Stir until **shaggy** and no dry flour remains.

2) Adjust water only if needed

- If it feels too dry or flour won't incorporate, add a small splash.
- **Max water: 575 g.**
- Dough should be **sticky** — that's normal.

3) 30-minute rest (room temp)

- Cover and let sit **30 minutes** so hydration finishes.

4) Cold fermentation

- Cover well and refrigerate **12–18 hours**.
- No timers. No extra chores. Time builds flavor.

DAY 2 — SHAPE + BAKE

5) Preheat

- Preheat oven to **475°F**.
- If baking a boule in a Dutch oven/combo cooker: **preheat the pot in the oven** while it heats.

6) Turn out + divide

1. Flour your board with **bench flour** (regular flour).
 2. Turn out dough and divide **in half**.
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SHAPE OPTION A — BOULE (Casereccio-style)

1. Turn dough so the top is down.
2. Fold sides in (simple folds; no fancy stitching).
3. Roll up like a cinnamon roll.
4. Use bench scraper to tighten into a smooth round (build surface tension).
5. Pinch the seam side.
6. Place into a **rice-floured banneton** (rice flour helps it release cleanly).

Proof: rise until **puffy + jiggly**, about **45 minutes** (depending on room).

SHAPE OPTION B — “STRETCH BREAD” (Rustic Table Bread)

1. Gently stretch dough with fingertips into a long rustic shape.
2. Flour the top **more than you think** (wet dough).
3. Cut straight down the middle to make **two** stretch breads.
4. Place on parchment-lined sheet pan **not touching**.

Covering:

- Cover with a **damp towel** (wrung out well) to prevent a skin.
- Add a second towel on top to keep them cozy and warm.

Proof: about **45 minutes**, until **poofy**.

STEAM + BAKING NOTES

Steam tray method (lava rocks + ice)

- Keep a tray with lava rocks on the oven floor.
- When ready to bake, toss in **ice cubes** to create steam for better lift (home version of steam injection).

Boule (Dutch oven / combo cooker)

1. Flip onto parchment.
2. Score once (gives expansion room).
3. Lower carefully into the preheated pot.

Bake:

- **25 minutes covered @ 475°F**
 - then **20 minutes uncovered @ 475°F**
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SUCCESS CUES (what to look for)

- Sticky dough is normal — use flour + scraper confidently.
 - Banneton: **rice flour** prevents sticking.
 - Final proof: dough looks **puffy** and has a **gentle jiggle**.
 - Crust + lift comes from: hydration + steam + hot oven + time.
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OPTIONAL TOPPING IDEA (your note)

If you're not doing the traditional floured top on stretch breads, sprinkle with:

- onion powder + garlic powder + sea salt + pepper
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