

An Old-World Italian Stuffed Bread (Made the Traditional Way)

Bread Baking Series · Homestead Wife Life

This recipe was inspired by a stuffed bread I once saw served as street food on a travel show about Italy — sold by weight, sliced to order, and meant to be eaten by hand. There was no recipe shared, only a method to observe.

Over the years, I built my own version using a familiar long-fermented dough and a filling of gently cooked sausage, sweet onions, wine, and cheese — focusing on balance, restraint, and abundance without excess. The bread is meant to be generously filled, well-sealed, and deeply baked, so every slice delivers both structure and substance.

This recipe is a practical example of how to use a dough you already know — turning one batch of bread into a complete, satisfying meal.

Yield

1 generously stuffed loaf + 1 plain loaf
(For two generously stuffed loaves, double the filling ingredients.)

Bread Dough

Use Bread Baking 103 — Italian Casereccio & Rustic Table Bread dough, prepared through the overnight cold fermentation stage (12–18 hours). Divide the dough in half before shaping. One portion will be used for the stuffed bread; the second portion may be baked plain.

Sausage & Cheese Filling

- 1½–2 pounds sweet or spicy Italian sausage (bulk or removed from casings)
- 2 medium yellow onions, thinly sliced (or 1 large)
- 3–4 garlic cloves, chopped
- Olive oil, for cooking
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- Pinch crushed red pepper flakes (optional)

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dry white wine
- 8 ounces Fontina cheese, cut into small cubes
- 4 ounces Pecorino Romano cheese, finely grated

Prepare the Filling

Heat a generous drizzle of olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat until shimmering.

Add the sausage and cook until very lightly browned, about 80% cooked. The sausage will finish cooking in the oven — this prevents drying.

Remove the sausage from the pan, leaving the rendered fat behind.

Add the garlic and cook briefly until fragrant and lightly golden.

Add the onions and sauté until softened and just beginning to take on color.

Season with salt, black pepper, dried oregano, and crushed red pepper flakes if using.

Deglaze the pan with the white wine, scraping up any browned bits. Reduce until the liquid has decreased by about half.

Transfer the onion mixture to a large bowl and combine with the sausage. Allow the filling to cool completely.

If the filling seems very loose or wet, allow it to cool and drain briefly before mixing with cheese.

Assemble the Stuffed Bread

Preheat the oven to 400°F (205°C).

On a lightly floured surface, gently press one portion of dough into a rectangle.

Fold the cooled sausage mixture together with the cubed Fontina cheese.

Place the filling down the center of the dough in a strip approximately 2½–3 inches wide, leaving space at the ends.

Sprinkle the Pecorino Romano evenly over the filling.

Fold the long sides of the dough up and over the filling, meeting in the center. Press gently to seal.

Roll the dough seam-side down and gently shape into a long loaf, smoothing just enough to create an even shape.

Seal the ends well and place seam-side down on a parchment-lined sheet pan.

Cover gently with a damp cloth and allow to rise for 30–40 minutes, until puffy.

Score & Bake

Using a lame or very sharp knife, cut 5 diagonal slits across the top of the loaf, ensuring the filling is visible through the slashes. This allows steam to escape and prevents the bread from bursting.

Bake at 400°F until deeply golden and the internal temperature reaches 203–205°F at the center.

Remove from the oven and allow to cool for at least 45 minutes before slicing.

Serve

Slice and serve warm or at room temperature. Excellent with spicy tomato sauce on the side for dipping.

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