

from SCRATCH

BOUTIQUE BAKERY

By Elizabeth Gawthrop Riely

As she fondly recounts, “Any meal can be brought to another level with a great loaf of bread,” says Meredith Ciaburri, (pronounced cha-BOOR-ee). She has just returned from her morning deliveries in the area around the town of Rochester, Massachusetts. The Artisan Kitchen, which she describes as a “boutique bakery,” is where Meredith practices the craft of baking bread from scratch. Her devoted customers know just how lucky they are.

“I started out doing cakes and pastries,” says Meredith. But gradually, with experience, she came to like breads most. “I like the long process, from start to finish,” she explains, especially with sourdough. “The end product is so satisfying, complex, and it’s different from day to day. It’s a staple—back to basics.”

“After making it once, if it doesn’t come out perfectly,” she advises aspiring bakers, “don’t give up. It’s alive. Yeast is a living organism. The second or third loaf will turn out better.” Most of all, she says, “don’t be afraid of it!”

The quality of the water makes a difference and, of course, the flour. King Arthur Flour, which is unbleached and unbromated, is Meredith’s favorite brand for bread flour. She recommends their whole-wheat white: “It’s great for kids who don’t like whole-wheat. It has the same nutritional value, but it’s less strong in flavor and texture. Use half whole-wheat white and half white. It looks like all white.”

The Artisan Kitchen makes about fifteen styles of bread that Meredith rotates, baking them with two full-time employees and a part-time student from a local vocational high school. Of these breads, the ciabatta took a while for her to get right. But, intrigued by the technique, she persisted—and readers can try her ciabatta recipe, below. Among the most popular breads are harvest, cracked flax, rustic dipping bread, semolina baguette, and buttermilk honey. “Buttermilk honey’s perfect for peanut butter and jelly,” she says. Her own favorite is the cheddar-onion-dill bread: “In tomato season, I can’t resist having it with tomatoes.” The enthusiasm in her voice confirms her preference.

“I always liked to cook,” says Meredith, who grew up in Rochester. “I come from a family full of great cooks.” In her fifth year of business and barely 25 years old, she knows what she is doing. Professional preparation came from an undergraduate degree from the Culinary Institute of America, where she was class valedictorian, and then a business degree with honors from Johnson and Wales.



Meredith is very much a part of the artisanal food scene in Rochester. For all of the bakery’s savory pastries, breads, pies, and cakes, she uses local produce wherever possible. Cervelli Farms in Rochester supplies her with rhubarb, berries, their entire crop of sour cherries, apples, and other orchard fruit. Eggs come from Quansett Garden in Westport. Herbs and ingredients for her quiche come from Lucky Field Organics in Rochester. Strawberries are from Howland Farm in Acushnet. Working directly with local farmers like these in the community where her own roots grow deep, she knows her produce is fresh, wholesome, and at its absolute best.

Meredith’s products are available at How on Earth:-The Store in Mattapoisett as well as Lees Market in Westport. Meredith’s business is by appointment only, however you can order on line through her website www.theartisankitchen.com. She has just finished a small addition for more work space.

Down the road, she’d like to expand into a retail space where her grateful customers can match her enthusiasm with their own.

For more information:

The Artisan Kitchen
265 Walnut Plain Rd.
Rochester, MA 02770
(508) 763-4905
meredith@theartisankitchen.com
www.theartisankitchen.com



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Ciabatta

- 4 cups (22 oz.) bread flour (preferably King Arthur)
- 2 cups plus 2 Tbsp bottled water, 70 degrees.
- 1 tsp table salt, or 1½ tsp kosher salt
- 1½ tsp yeast

Put all ingredients in a large bowl and mix with a wooden spoon; or mix in a standing mixer fitted with dough hooks on low speed for 2 minutes.

Place a large damp tea towel over the bowl and allow it to sit in a warm place, away from drafts, for 1 hour. Mix again for 1 minute. You will notice that the dough will become shiny and start to pull away from the sides of the bowl. Allow dough to rest for 20 minutes with a damp tea towel over the bowl.

Preheat your oven to 500 degrees.

Scrape the dough onto floured board or counter. Lightly fold dough in half, being careful not to press down on dough or allow any flour to be folded into it. With a metal bench scraper or chef's knife, cut dough into 2 equal pieces.

Place each piece of dough in its own 2-quart, heavily floured bowl, about ¼ cup of flour in each bowl. Allow the dough to rise away from drafts for about 20 minutes, until the dough springs back almost completely when a fingertip is pressed into it.

Simply turn the dough out onto a lightly floured cookie sheet and place in the preheated oven; immediately turn oven down to 450 degrees. Bake 12–17 minutes, until dark amber brown, or until a thermometer inserted into the bread registers 190 degrees.

Makes two 1-pound loaves.

Recipe courtesy of The Artisan Kitchen

Whole-Wheat Bread

- 1½ packages yeast
- 1 tsp sugar
- 2½ cups warm water
- 1 Tbsp salt
- 1 Tbsp molasses
- 3 cups whole-wheat flour, preferably stone-ground
- About 4 cups unbleached white flour
- 1 Tbsp butter, at room temperature

Put yeast and sugar in a small bowl with ½ cup warm (not hot) water and let it proof (about 5 minutes, the mixture should be bubbly). In another small bowl mix together salt, molasses and remaining 2 cups of warm water. Put whole-wheat flour and 3 cups white flour in a large bowl, make a well in the center, and pour in the yeast mixture. Gradually stir into the flour, then add the salt–molasses–water mixture, stirring to make smooth dough. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured board and knead for 5 to 10 minutes, adding as much additional flour as the dough will easily take. Form it into a ball and turn it in a large, well-buttered bowl to coat the dough. Cover with a cloth and let rise in a warm draft-free place until doubled in bulk.

Punch dough down and divide in two. Flatten each piece on the board and roll evenly to form a loaf, pinching at the seam to close. Put each loaf in a well-buttered bread pan (8½ x 4½ x 2½ inches), seam side down. Cover with cloth and let rise again until doubled in bulk; dough should rise above sides of the pans.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Brush the tops of bread with a little cold water. Bake the bread in the oven for 10 minutes; reduce heat to 350 degrees and bake 35–40 minutes longer. Turn the loaves out of the pans. If done, they should sound hollow when tapped on the bottom. If not quite done, set the bare loaves back on the oven rack for a few minutes more. Let the loaves cool completely on a rack before slicing.

Makes 2 loaves.

Recipe courtesy of Elizabeth Gawthrop Riely

Focaccia

Focaccia is nothing but pizza made with more dough and less topping. This Italian peasant bread was originally baked on the hearth—*focus* in Latin, the center of the house. When the yeasty dough is rolled out and risen, dimple it with your fingertips, drizzle olive oil over the surface, and scatter a handful of dried herbs, grated cheese, chopped garlic, pancetta, or other flavoring on top. This is a great bread to make with children: they will like both the poking of the dough and the wafting of the aroma from the oven.

For the dough:

- 1 1/3 cups warm water
- 1 package yeast
- 1 tsp sugar
- 3 cups flour plus more for the board
- 1 tsp salt
- 4 Tbsps olive oil (divided into 3 Tbsps and 1 Tbsp)

For the topping:

- 1/3 to 1/2 cup olive oil
- Coarse salt
- Rosemary, thyme, sage, or other dried herb
- Pancetta (optional)
- Grated Parmesan, crumbled chèvre, or other cheese
- Other flavoring as desired,
(not too much or too many together)

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.

Put water and sugar in a large bowl; sprinkle the yeast over the top and let it proof (about 5 minutes, should be bubbly). Stir in the flour, salt, and 3 Tbsp of oil; mix to form a smooth dough. Turn the dough out onto a well-floured board and knead for 10 minutes, until it is no longer sticky; form the dough into a ball. Rinse out the bowl, wipe dry, and smear with remaining Tbsp of oil. Turn dough in the bowl to coat its surface with oil;

leave in a warm place, covered, until the dough doubles in size, about 1 hour.

Punch down the dough and divide it in half; form each into a round (wrap the second in plastic and freeze it, if you wish). For each focaccia, generously oil a 9-inch cake pan. Pat or roll out the dough evenly and lay in the pan. Cover it with a cloth or plastic, set in a warm place, and let it rise to an inch or more (approximately 1 hour).

When the dough has risen, dimple it here and there with your fingertips. Drizzle the olive oil evenly over the surface. Some of it will pool in the pockets but most of it will be absorbed. Scatter the salt, herbs, grated cheese and other flavorings as you wish; don't overdo it. Bake the focaccia until golden in color, about 25 minutes. Let it cool slightly and serve cut into wedges.

Makes 2 focaccias.

Recipe courtesy of Elizabeth Gawthrop Riely



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