

Ciabatta Bread

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This bread is kind of freaky. It requires no kneading, and gives the impression of being completely wrong until it actually emerges from the oven. It's really, really, really easy to make.

500 g flour
450 - 500 ml lukewarm water
.5 tsp sugar
1.5 tsp salt
11 g pack of dry yeast
Olive oil (a drizzle or three)

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Mix all your dry ingredients together in a bowl. If you live in a cold country, warm the bowl first (run hot water over the outside, fill it with cats, lick it - whatever).

Pour the water in and mix everything together with your hands (I just use one hand because it gets very sticky). Your dough at this point will look more like batter, and you'll go, "What is this crap?" Trust me, it's fine. If it isn't like thick, sloppy goop, add a bit more water.

This is kind of hard to explain - 'pull', 'stretch' and 'slap' the dough, picking it up in handfuls and slamming it back down into the bowl. Scrape the bottom of the bowl as you go, slapping and slopping. This aerates the dough and after five minutes the texture will be noticeably smoother and silkier.

Drizzle olive oil over the surface - about a tablespoon or two. Put some cling film over the bowl and leave it in a warm place to rise.

After an hour, your dough will probably have risen a lot. It may even be touching the surface of your cling film. Good! It's ready to be cooked alive.

Get the oven going at 200°C. Pour your puffed-up batter into a large baking tin (one with sides) lined with baking paper and throw it in the oven.

I don't want to give a strict oven time here, but around 30 minutes is okay. Just keep an eye on the bread. It will develop dark spots, and eventually the surface will become a lovely brown colour.

This bread is really nice sliced fresh from the oven with some salted butter.

