

Filoncino

... or an Italian version of a baguette. Not to be confused with the French Stick – the English version of the baguette which is 24 inches of pale bendy disappointment and about as authentic as Peckham Spring Water.

Preparation time: 10 minutes plus 3 hours rising

Cooking time: about 25 minutes

Makes: 3 small loaves

Skill level: Medium



Ingredients

- strong white bread flour – 525g (plus extra for dusting)
- instant yeast – 1tsp
- sea salt – 2tsp
- cold water – about 250ml
- semolina

Method

Gradually add enough cold water (250ml – 275ml) to form a ball of firm dough.

Turn out onto a floured surface and knead for 5 minutes.

Shape into a ball, dust with flour, return to the bowl, cover with cling film and set aside for about 2 hours or until the dough has doubled in size.

Turn the dough out onto a floured surface and divide into 3 pieces.

Form each piece into a ball (be gentle as you don't want to knock out all the air), cover with a tea towel and leave to rest for 15 minutes.

Now to shape your bread:

Pat each ball down to a rough rectangle approximately 101.6mm x 127mm and 25.4mm thick.

Fold the side furthest from you over towards you and seal the seam using the heel of your hand.

Turn through 180 degrees and fold the side furthest from you over towards you and seal the seam using the heel of your hand.

Next fold in half lengthways and seal the edges with your fingertips.

Roll out into a cylinder about 350mm long and tapering at the ends.

Place your loaves on a flat baking sheet which has been generously sprinkled with semolina (if you don't have a flat baking sheet use a shallow baking tray and turn it upside down).

Cover with a tea towel and set aside for 30 minutes by which time the loaves should have increased in size by about 50%.

Meanwhile, preheat your oven to 240c/gas mark 9 – if you have a baking stone put this in the oven to heat up – if you don't have a baking stone either use a heavy gauge upturned baking tray or possibly buy one from here.

Slash your loaves diagonally with a razor blade/sharp craft knife and dust with flour.

Carefully slide your loaves onto the baking stone (the semolina should ensure you can do this in one elegant carefree movement)

Turn down the heat to 230c/gas mark 8 and bake for 25 minutes, spraying the oven with a mist of cold water 2 or 3 times in the first 10 minutes.

Your loaves should now be a beautiful golden brown.

Place on racks to cool.

Verdict: A handsome crusty chewy and relatively faff-free loaf.

Drink: Would go equally well with a milky coffee in the morning or a hearty red in the evening.

Entertainment: For some reason got sidetracked watching clips of Only Fools and Horses on YouTube.