



The Italian Baker

By Carol Field

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The Italian Baker By Carol Field

Bread in Italy is rough country loaves with thick chewy crusts and flat disks of focaccia seasoned with the wild herbs of the fields. It is celebratory sweet holiday breads dense with fat raisins, toasted nuts and candied fruit peels. It is "new wave" breads, recently invented by artisan bakers and studded with roasted peppers, sun-dried tomatoes and salty olive paste. It is imaginative multi-grain breads and rolls with tastes and shapes that vary dramatically from region to region.

Recipes for the breads of all these regions, for the comforting rustic soups and salads and appetizers based on them, for breadsticks and rolls, pizza and focaccia, for holiday specialties, for pastries, cookies, cornetti and nut tortes, fruit tarts, cheesecakes and spice cakes and other confections-all are offered in this landmark volume which presents, for the first time in English or Italian, the diverse baking traditions of Italy.

Knowing these regional specialties and the stories behind them is like taking a trip through the Italian countryside. Putting the recipes on paper as Carol Field has done is like preserving the villages in the Italian hillsides with their churches and frescoes, for they are part of a tradition that has never before been recorded. In preparing for this book, Carol Field spent two years working with the bakers of Italy, traversing the country again and again from Lugano and Como in the north to Lecce and Palermo in the south, tasting and testing, then going back to the States to rework the recipes in an American kitchen with American ingredients. The result is recipes that are impeccably written for utmost ease and flexibility. Some are simple and earthy, some elegant and refined, but all will be a revelation to Americans who have previously known Italian breads and desserts only from the limited and stereotyped range available until now. Each recipe offers instructions for making doughs by hand, by electric mixer, and by food processor. Illustrations provide clear step-by-step how-to, and chapters on ingredients, equipment and technique reveal all the whys and wherefores.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Italy's breads are "expressions of an earthy culture that still talks about its most fundamental experiences in terms of bread. . . . A down-to-earth man with a real heart of gold is described as 'buono come il pane' good, like bread," observes Field (*The Hill Towns of Italy*). Her book of baked goods is packed with recipes for breads made with herbs, mushrooms, fruits and cheeses; traditional loaves; breadsticks and rolls; chocolate and holiday breads; pizza and focaccia; as well as strudels and tarts, cakes and cookies. There are even recipes for leftover breadcrostini, garlicky vegetable soup, apple cake. Included also are directions for kneading by hand, by mixer and by food processor; dry ingredients are measured by both volume and weight. In order to write this book, Field worked with bakers in different regions of Italy and watched women making bread for their families. She recreates here for the American baker authentic Italian tastes and textures. Her informed discussion of ingredients and methods and her engaging commentary on the role of bread in Italy's history make this an important book for bakers. 20,000 first printing; Cooking & Crafts Book Club main selection; author tour. Foreign rights: Harper. October 30

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About the Author

Carol Field is the author of four cookbooks, *In Nonna's Kitchen*, *Focaccia*, *Celebrating Italy*, and *The Italian Baker*, as well as *The Hill Towns of Italy* and *Mangoes and Quince*, a novel. She has won two IACP Cookook Book Awards, a James Beard Award, and the Gold Medal for Cookbooks at the World Media Awards in Australia. She lives in San Francisco with her architect husband and continues to travel back and forth to Italy.

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