Semolina Bread

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Recipe by: Laura Vitale

Makes 2 Loaves

Prep Time: 25 minutes
Cook Time: 30 minutes

Ingredients

For the Poolish:
__1/2 cup Bread flour
__1/2 cup Water, room temperature
__1/8 tsp Instant yeast
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For the Dough:
__All of the prepared poolish
__1-1/2 cups Bread flour
__1-1/2 cups Fine semolina flour (semola rimacinata/durum wheat flour)
__1 cup Water, room temperature
__1 Tbsp Sugar
__1 Tbsp Olive oil
__2 tsp Instant yeast
__2 tsp Salt
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For Topping:
__Water, for spraying
__Sesame seeds, for sprinkling

1) 8 to 12 hours ahead, mix the bread flour, water and yeast for the poolish in a bowl until combined, cover loosely and leave at room temperature until bubbly, a minimum of 8 hours.

2) In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook, add the poolish, bread flour, semolina flour, water, sugar, olive oil and yeast, mix on medium-low speed for about 3 minutes, just until a rough dough forms, cover loosely and rest for 30 minutes to allow the flour to hydrate.

3) Add the salt and knead on medium speed for about 8 minutes, or until the dough is smooth, and elastic, then transfer to a lightly oiled bowl, cover and allow to rise until doubled in size, about 1-1/2 hours.

4) Deflate the dough, divide into 4 equal pieces and roll each into a long rope, about 12 inches, twist 2 ropes together to form a braided loaf, pinching the ends into a point using the sides of your palms and repeat with the remaining dough, then place both loaves on a parchment lined baking sheet.

5) Lightly spray the loaves with water, cover with a damp kitchen towel and allow to rise for about 30 minutes, meanwhile preheat your oven to 400F with an empty metal pan on the bottom rack.

6) Score the risen loaves with a sharp knife a few slits down each one, then spray lightly with water, sprinkle generously with sesame seeds, place the baking sheet on the middle rack and carefully add a handful of ice cubes to the hot pan below to create steam.

7) Bake for 25 to 30 minutes until deeply golden and the loaves sound hollow when tapped on the bottom, then transfer to a wire rack and allow to cool before slicing.