



THE WAY THE COOKIE CRUMBLES

A FOOD BLOG

Semolina Bread (adapted from Pane Siciliano from Peter Reinhart's *Bread Baker's Apprentice*)

1 recipe pate fermentée (recipe follows)

1¾ cups (8 ounces) bread flour

1¾ cups (8 ounces) semolina flour

1¼ teaspoon salt

1¼ teaspoon instant yeast

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon honey

1¼ cups water, room temperature

sesame seeds

1. Remove the pate fermentée from the refrigerator 1 hour before mixing the final dough.

2. Stand mixer: Mix the pate fermentée, flours, salt, yeast, oil, honey, and water in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook. Mix on medium-low speed until the dough is elastic and supple, about 8 minutes. You may need to add a little more flour or water to get the correct consistency – smooth and tacky, but not sticky. Transfer the dough to an oiled bowl and cover with plastic wrap or a damp dishtowel.

By hand: Cut the pate fermentée into 8-12 pieces. Mix the flours, salt, and yeast in a large bowl. Make a well in the middle of the dry ingredients and add the pate fermentée, olive oil, honey, and water. Stir the mixture until the dough comes together. Transfer it to a floured board or countertop and knead, incorporating as little flour as possible, for about 10 minutes, until the dough is elastic and supple. You may need to add a little more flour or water to get the correct consistency – smooth and tacky, but not sticky. Transfer the dough to an oiled bowl and cover with plastic wrap or a damp dishtowel.

3. Ferment at room temperature for about 2 hours, until the dough doubles in size.

4. Divide the dough into three equal portions. Very gently pull the edges of each portion around to one side and pinch them together to form a ball. Roll the dough between the palm of your hand and a lightly floured board or a damp kitchen towel (my preferred method). With the seam side up, push the sides of your thumbs into the dough, pulling the dough into an oblong. Pinch the seam together; repeat the process once more on the same dough ball to form a rope. Roll the rope, pushing it out into a longer rope, until it's about 24 inches long. If it resists you at any point, let it rest for a few minutes before trying again. Then, working with each end simultaneously, coil the dough toward the center, forming an S-shape. Arrange the shaped loaves on parchment paper and sprinkle them with sesame seeds. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.

5. The next day, remove the dough from the refrigerator. Let it warm up and, if necessary, finish rising, which will take a couple hours. The dough is ready to bake when it has doubled in size and remains dimpled when poked.

6. While the dough is rising, place a baking stone on the bottom rack of the oven and a heavy metal baking pan on the top rack. Heat the oven to 500 degrees.

7. Transfer the risen loaves with the parchment paper to the hot baking stone. Pour 1 cup hot water into the metal pan on the top rack and close the door. After 30 seconds, open the door and spritz the sides of the oven with water. Repeat twice more at 30 second intervals. After the final spray, lower the oven temperature to 450 degrees and bake for 25 to 30 minutes longer, until the crust is golden brown and the internal temperature is between 200 and 205 degrees.

8. Transfer the bread to a wire rack; cool 45 minutes before serving.

Pate fermentée

1⅞ cups (5 ounces) unbleached all-purpose flour

1⅞ cups (5 ounces) unbleached bread flour

¾ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon instant yeast

¾ cup to ¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons (6 to 7 ounces) water

1. Stir together the flours, salt, and yeast in a 4-quart bowl (or in the bowl of a standing mixer). Add ¾ cup of the water, stirring until everything comes together and makes a coarse ball (or mix on low speed for 1 minute with the paddle attachment). Adjust the flour or water, according to need, so that the dough is neither too sticky nor too stiff. (It is better to err on the sticky side, as you can adjust easier during kneading. It is harder to add water once the dough firms up.)

2. Sprinkle some flour on the counter and transfer the dough to the counter. Knead for 4 to 6 minutes (or mix on medium speed with the dough hook for 4 minutes), or until the dough is soft and pliable, tacky but not sticky. The internal temperature should be 77 to 81 degrees.

3. Lightly oil a bowl and transfer the dough to the bowl, rolling it around to coat it with oil. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and ferment at room temperature for 1 hour, or until it swells to about 1½ times its original size.

4. Remove the dough from the bowl, knead it slightly to degas, and return it to the bowl, covering the bowl with plastic wrap. Place the bowl in the refrigerator overnight. You can keep this in the refrigerator for up to 3 days, or freeze it in an airtight plastic bag for up to 3 months.