

# ALFORNO COUNTRY BREAD

The bread served at Alforno is baked daily using this three-day process. It is true artisan bread with a depth of flavor that comes from the use of a starter, long fermentation and retardation overnight in the refrigerator.

The best results will come from using the highest gluten flour you can find. Examples are King Arthur Sir Lancelot (14 percent gluten) or King Arthur Special (12 percent gluten), both available in the King Arthur catalogue ([www.kingarthurfLOUR.com/shop](http://www.kingarthurfLOUR.com/shop)).

You'll need certain tools: an instant read thermometer, a dough scraper, a stand mixer, portion scale, measuring spoons, a large bowl for proofing/fermentation, a baking pan and/or pizza stone. If you use a pizza stone, you can place the bread directly on the stone for baking.

This bread will remain fresh for up to three days but if left on the counter will continue toward sour dough. To keep the same flavor profile, wrap the bread and store it in the refrigerator. The bread also freezes well when wrapped in double-wrapped in aluminum foil and plastic wrap.

For more information about artisan bread baking and additional recipes and techniques, please read Peter Reinhart's "The Bread Baker's Apprentice," available from [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) or any bookseller with a strong cookbook section.

Day 1:

Prepare starter as follows:

8 ounces high-gluten bread flour  
8 ounces 75-degree water  
1/3 teaspoon instant yeast (SAF is a good brand; do not use rapid-rise)

Mix flour, water and yeast in a large bowl with a wooden spoon or spatula until incorporated, about 30 to 60 seconds. Cover bowl with plastic wrap, and set on the counter for 18 hours. It will rise and bubble up to the top of the container. The consistency will be soupy.

Day 2:

Dough preparation:

16 ounces high-gluten bread flour  
4 ounces of the starter made the previous day  
8 ounces 75-degree water  
1/3 teaspoon instant yeast  
.05 ounce kosher salt

### Procedure:

In an electric mixer fitted with the paddle, mix all ingredients on low speed for 2 minutes or until ingredients are incorporated. Remove paddle and switch to dough hook. Increase to medium speed, and mix/knead for 5 minutes. Check temperature of dough ball; it should be 75 to 78 degrees. Turn out dough onto a floured board, and knead for 30 seconds by hand. Place in a large container that will allow it to triple in size.

Cover with plastic wrap and allow to rest for 3 to 6 hours, depending on temperature of kitchen. When dough has tripled in size, scrape out the dough onto a floured board and flatten with both hands to de-gas the dough. (This used to be called punching down.)

Fold dough into thirds, rotate 90 degrees, fold into thirds again, and return to container. Cover container and allow to triple again, 30 to 60 minutes.

After dough has tripled, repeat the folding process. Return to container, and allow to triple in size again.

### Loaf preparation:

Turn out dough onto a floured board. De-gas again, and form into a ball. Put dough ball on a lightly floured baking sheet, and cover loosely with plastic wrap. Allow to rise at room temperature until doubled in size. Place in refrigerator overnight.

### Day 3:

#### Baking bread:

Remove bread from refrigerator. Preheat oven to 500 degrees. Remove plastic wrap from dough ball. Sprinkle top of dough lightly with flour. With a sharp knife, slash the top of the loaf ¼-inch deep in any design you prefer. Open oven door and quickly spray oven with water. Insert baking pan with bread, and close oven door. Lower temperature to 480 degrees. After 5 minutes, spray water under the pan of bread. Bake until crust is golden brown and internal temperature is 210 degrees. Remove from oven. Place bread on a cooling rack, and allow to cool to room temperature, about 2 hours. This bread is best eaten at room temperature.