

Break bread with the best



EAT, PRINT, LOVE

Anna Axelson
Co-Editor-in-Chief

What makes French bread, "French?" Considering the Italian ciabatta bread encompasses essentially the same ingredients, I can't say it's the ingredients. While technique may differ from kitchen to kitchen, that's true of all cooking, so I can't say it's the technique. So what is the answer to my oh so simple question?

After a healthy amount of research, scowring recipe after recipe, opinion after opinion, I can confidently say with the utmost certainty... that I have absolutely no clue other than to say that French bread is French because it was initially made in France.

French or not, I once dreaded yeast breads. Having the patience of a flea, quick breads got the job done and got it done right, but alas, there is more in this world and I had room to grow. Luckily I was welcomed into the "poofy" embrace of cooking yeast breads and have learned the ways of culinary patience. Named "Italian" for its flavors and "French" because, as they say, "don't fix something that ain't broke," here's a delightful offering from *EPL's* kitchen to yours.

Italian French Bread

1 tsp sugar
2 1/4 cups warm water
1 tsp table salt
(or 2 tsp kosher salt)
1 1/4 tsp dry active yeast
Garlic powder
Fresh ground pepper
Oregano flakes
Parsley flakes
1-3 cloves of garlic,
roughly chopped
6 1/4 cups flour

Begin by dissolving the sugar in the warm water (hot tap water works). A few moments of stirring should do the trick. Sprinkle the yeast over the surface of the water and let sit for five to eight minutes, or until yeast has "poofed," creating a layer of foam. Gently stir in the salt, garlic, garlic powder, pepper, oregano and parsley flakes. Add a cup of the flour and mix well.

Commit to getting a little messy, forgo the spoon and add in the rest of the flour a little bit at a time. Knead with the fervor of a purring kitten until you end up with a smooth ball of dough that doesn't stick to your fingers and bounces back when given a gentle Pillsbury Doughboy poke. Coat the inside of a bowl with olive oil and drop in your ball of dough, rolling it around to coat. Cover with a dish towel and let rise in a warm, dark place for 90 minutes.

It's at this point that I always picture that episode of "I Love Lucy" in which Lucy and Ethel, during one of their farcous bets, bake a loaf of bread. In this episode they completely misjudge how much yeast the recipe called for, ending up in a scene worthy of any 1950s sci-fi thriller. This mental image always causes me to think back and re-evaluate just how much yeast I put in.

After passing the time as you so please (three whole episodes of "Lucy" will do the trick) the dough should have doubled in size and you are ready to work with it. Separate the dough into two pieces and form it roughly into "loaf" shape. Place each loaf a few inches apart on a lightly greased or cornmeal dusted cookie sheet. Once again cover with a dish towel and set aside to rise for another tedious 45 minutes.

Preheat your oven to a toasty 425 degrees and with a sharp knife, lightly slash shallow diagonal lines across the top of each loaf. Place an oven safe dish with water in the oven to prevent the bread from drying out. Bake for thirty minutes or until golden brown.

After letting it rest for 20 minutes, it's time to slice. For me, a bread knife creates more mess than it's worth, so I rely on my trusted and preferable chef's knife to slice the heat kissed goodness that is a fresh, home baked loaf of bread. Bon appétit from *EPL!*



Top: Two local hikers, Laura Robertson (front) and Sue Gibbs (back) prepare for a peaceful trail walking experience within the 26 acre Natural Preserve located in West Linn's Camassia Natural Preserve. Bottom: This small clearing is an attractive place to stop and just absorb the beauty and solace of Oregon's natural landscaping.

Andrew Koczia The Clackamas Print

Camassia Natural Preserve, located on 5000 Walnut St., in West Linn, is 26 acres of breath-taking views and the amazing wildlife that calls it home.

The park offers a peaceful natural area with paths, trails and wildlife viewing opportunities. The preserve gets its name from the 'common camas' or Camassia quamash, which is a purple flower that blooms in April and early May. The common camas was at one point considered a delicacy to the Pacific Northwest Native Americans. Although around this time of the year the common camas looks like as if it is the only flower in the preserve. Camassia is home to over 300 plant species.

Camassia provides a safe home to many animal species as well. Some of the well-known bird species include the wood duck, California quail, woodpecker, western bluebird and the golden-crowned kinglet. The trails tend to be a little on the muddy side if it's been wet, but fresh bark has been laid making the trails easier to conquer. One thing to look out for while in Camassia is the poison oak, which is mentioned on a sign at the trailhead.

One of the most memorable parts of hiking through Camassia is the changing terrain as you make your way through the many trail options. From windy bark trails that trek through creeks to walking across hand laid planks over small pools of water.

The coolest feature is the huge basaltic bedrock wall that you climb up in order to continue on the trail. The large rocky plateau at the top of the wall was exposed 12,000-19,000 years ago during the 'Bertz Floods.' The flood swept down what is now the Columbia River Gorge and cut deep into the Willamette Valley.

The floods washed out a lot of the topsoil and vegetation from the area leaving the plateau we see today. The preserve is also home to many granite boulders known as glacial erratics.

Although this preserve is meant to be enjoyed and is open to the public, the Nature Perseveration Department asks that hikers follow a few rules to keep from disturbing the habitat such as: stay on the trail and do not disturb the wildlife.

Depending on whether or not it has been raining, I would rate this hike on a scale from 1 to 10, 10 being a hike with a drill sergeant; somewhere between 2 to 4. The rock wall does pose a challenge for some and if it has been raining the trails are a bit tricky to maneuver. All in all it's a fantastic hike and a beautiful chunk of preserved wildlife that everyone should check out.



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