

RUSTIC CIABATTA WITH DATES AND FLAX SEEDS

(from [*Karen's Kitchen Stories*](#))

for the soaker:

48 grams flaxseeds

72 grams (1/3 C) water

for the poolish:

125 grams unbleached bread flour

125 grams (1/2 C) water

pinch of instant yeast

for the final dough:

278 grams (~1 1/4 C) water

All of the poolish

300 grams unbleached bread flour

50 grams coarsely ground whole wheat flour

25 grams coarsely ground rye flour

10 grams (1 3/4 tsp) salt

2 grams (~ 3/4 tsp) instant yeast

All of the soaker

84 grams dried dates, seeded previously, cut into 1/2 inch pieces

The night before baking day, mix the soaker and poolish in separate bowls. Cover both bowls with plastic wrap. Leave enough room in the poolish bowl for it to double in size.

The next day (about 12 to 16 hours later), measure the 278 grams of water into a large bowl or dough rising bucket. Add the poolish, and mix it into the water with your hand to break it apart. Add the flours, salt, and yeast, and mix the dough with your hands, stirring, pinching, and folding the dough to absorb all of the flour and dissolve the salt and yeast. When you pinch the dough, you should not feel any grit.

Once all of the ingredients are combined, mix in the soaker with your hand until evenly distributed. Add the dates, and mix to distribute. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let rise in a warm spot.

After 45 minutes, stretch and fold the dough over itself from all four "sides." Repeat the 45 minute rest followed by a stretch-and-fold two more times (a total of 3 stretch-and-folds). Let the dough rest for a final 45 minutes, covered, in a warm spot.

Scrape the dough out onto a lightly floured counter, and gently nudge it into a rectangle. Be careful not to deflate the dough. Using an oiled bench knife, cut the dough into three equal pieces. Pick each piece up with floured hands and place it on a floured couche or parchment lined baking sheet. Cover with the rest of the couche or oiled plastic wrap. Let the dough

rest for 20 minutes, while you heat the oven to 475 degrees F, and set it up with a steam pan on the lowest rack and a baking stone directly above it. Fill a spray bottle with water.

When the oven is at the correct temperature, transfer the loaves to the baking stone (see notes above, or place the baking sheet with the loaves on it in the oven). Place a cup of boiling water in the steam pan (cover your oven's window), and spray the oven walls with water. Quickly close the door. Bake the loaves for 25 to 30 minutes, rotating halfway through. They are done when the internal temperature reaches 200 to 210 degrees F. Cool on a wire rack.