



The Italian Baker

Carol Field

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Bread in Italy is rough country loaves with thick chewy crusts and flat disks of focaccia seasoned with the wild herbs of the fields. It is celebratory sweet holiday breads dense with fat raisins, toasted nuts and candied fruit peels. It is "new wave" breads, recently invented by artisan bakers and studded with roasted peppers, sun-dried tomatoes and salty olive paste. It is imaginative multi-grain breads and rolls with tastes and shapes that vary dramatically from region to region.

Recipes for the breads of all these regions, for the comforting rustic soups and salads and appetizers based on them, for breadsticks and rolls, pizza and focaccia, for holiday specialties, for pastries, cookies, cornetti and nut tarts, fruit tarts, cheesecakes and spice cakes and other confections—all are offered in this landmark volume which presents, for the first time in English or Italian, the diverse baking traditions of Italy.

Knowing these regional specialties and the stories behind them is like taking a trip through the Italian countryside. Putting the recipes on paper as Carol Field has done is like preserving the villages in the Italian hillsides with their churches and frescoes, for they are part of a tradition that has never before been recorded. In preparing for this book, Carol Field spent two years working with the bakers of Italy, traversing the country again and again from Lugano and Como in the north to Lecce and Palermo in the south, tasting and testing, then going back to the States to rework the recipes in an American kitchen with American ingredients. The result is recipes that are impeccably written for utmost ease and flexibility. Some are simple and earthy, some elegant and refined, but all will be a revelation to Americans who have previously known Italian breads and desserts only from the limited and stereotyped range available until now. Each recipe offers instructions for making doughs by hand, by electric mixer, and by food processor. Illustrations provide clear step-by-step how-to, and chapters on ingredients, equipment and technique reveal all the whys and wherefores.

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