

May 18 - 19

ALL ABOUT CIABATTA

Hosted by:

The Culinary Institute of America
San Antonio, TX
Heather Gasaway – Facility Liaison

Instructor:

Didier Rosada



RESPECTING THE PROCESS:

All About Ciabatta By ZACH LANGENKAMP

Guild Member and Director of Product Development, Blue Baker, College Station, TX

When the class list for the year was announced by The Guild, I eagerly scanned through the locations, hoping for another class in Texas. When I saw the “All About Ciabatta” class listed for San Antonio, I was doubly excited, as it was also being taught by Didier Rosada! The two-day class was graciously hosted by the San Antonio branch of The Culinary Institute of America. It was certainly a wonderful experience to have full use of their baking classroom and great equipment, and two instructors generously donated their precious weekend time to help with the class.

Didier started the class by telling us that, despite the name, the class wasn’t really about ciabatta; the class was all about learning various techniques (through making ciabatta) that can be applied to making any bread. Didier was careful to stress many times throughout the two days that what defines true artisan bread is the process that is used to make that bread, and what makes a baker an artisan baker is understanding and respecting that process. He used the various types of ciabatta we made during the class to illustrate the fundamental bread baking process and how it can be altered or tweaked to fit different ingredients or timetables, while still respecting its integrity.

The first day was spent making the traditional formula of ciabatta in different ways. The first was the most traditional formula that was made using a poolish preferment and employed a short mix plus three folds during the bulk fermentation to build the strength of the dough. While this is the most traditional method to make ciabatta, many bakers find it difficult to return to the dough every 45 minutes for another fold. In direct response to that situation, we made two successive doughs in which the gluten was almost fully developed in the mixer, and they received no folds during the bulk fermentation. These doughs used two different preferments to illustrate the differences in flavor and aroma between bread made with a poolish and with a biga. We finished off the day by mixing a ciabatta that received no folds and was retarded overnight in the cooler.

The results after baking were quite phenomenal, and also a little surprising in how alike the crumb structure was in all the breads. Didier successfully demonstrated the two approaches to building strength in a very wet dough. The first was to add all the water at the beginning and use a short mix in conjunction with folds to build strength. The second used the double hydration

The Culinary Institute of America in San Antonio, TX, has introduced an Associate in Applied Science (AAS) degree in baking and pastry arts, based on the curriculum offered at the college’s campuses in Hyde Park, NY and St. Helena, CA.

Classes emphasize extensive hands-on experience in baking and pastry techniques and production. Additional studies cover topics in design, equipment technology, nutrition, and management. Near the end of sophomore year, students gain practical experience at the school’s two restaurants, which are open to the public.

This expansion of the baking and pastry program is under the direction of Alain Dubernard, Department Chair for Baking and Pastry Arts.



FROM LEFT: Didier Rosada preparing a ciabatta dough for final cutting. The Ancient Grains Ciabatta

method of mixing: adding most of the water at the beginning of the mix (to get to a baguette consistency), developing the gluten, and then adding the remaining water after building strength in the dough. Both methods resulted in a beautiful, classic ciabatta shape with a moist, open crumb.

We spent the second day of class making flavor variations of ciabatta that Didier created. All of these doughs were mixed using the double hydration method and an improved mix for gluten development, needing no folds during bulk fermentation for strength. The first was the Ancient Grains Ciabatta, made using a sponge with teff flour and a poolish with amaranth flour. While this bread didn't have very much of the teff and amaranth in the total formula, the two ancient grain flours were used entirely in the preferments, maximizing their flavor and creating a wonderful bread.

Next up were the three variations using multiple grains and soakers for a heartier ciabatta. The Ciabatta Integrale used 20% whole wheat flour, a cracked wheat soaker, and a whole wheat sponge to deliver nutrition and loads of flavor. The Multigrain Ciabatta was similar, in that it also used whole wheat flour but employed a whole wheat poolish rather than a sponge, and a soaker made of rolled oats, flax, sesame, and sunflower seeds for a great grainy flavor and texture. Finally, the Functional Ciabatta combined a whole wheat poolish with a flax seed



PHOTOS ZACH LANGENKAMP

soaker, toasted pecans, agave syrup, oats, and currants for a final product that was bursting with flavor in addition to providing many health benefits.

The final bread was arguably the most highly anticipated by the class: Didier's Breakfast Ciabatta. This formula combined traditional ciabatta ingredients with those normally found in a brioche, for a sweet, wonderful breakfast bread. We added some egg, butter, and sugar to sweeten and enrich the dough, and after developing the gluten, incorporated dark chocolate chunks and candied orange peel as well. It probably goes without saying that these all disappeared by the end of the day.

A large part of my reason for taking this class was that Didier was teaching it, a sentiment that was echoed by most of the other students on the first day. I am continuously amazed not only by Didier's mastery of the bread baking craft, but also his ability to instruct others and pass on some measure of that skill as well. I



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The Functional Ciabatta. Didier striking a pose about to answer a question. The Ciabatta for Retarding.

continuously discovered little nuggets of knowledge and skill from Didier during the two days, usually when he was answering one of the many insightful questions of the other students. One of the survey questions at the end asked us to rate how our expectations were met; at first I felt this a bit unfair, as my own expectations were so high to begin with, but even so, they were exceeded in this great class. ★

PHOTOS JENNIFER BAKER



Kathleen Busche plays the gluten harp after Didier Rosada demonstrates the Improved/Double Hydration method of mixing ciabatta dough, which eliminates the necessity of folds and saves time and labor in the ciabatta process.