



## Making Roman Bread with Ceres

Ceres (Greek Demeter) was the goddess of wheat. We honor her by appreciating her gifts! This bread recipe is based on one by Cato the Elder in about 200 B.C. It requires only flour and water, although Romans did often add salt and spices. Most loaves were probably baked as rounds, but later some were divided into 8 wedges, like pizza. You can try either style.

**Ingredients** (this can be halved for a child's loaf)

- 4 cups whole wheat or spelt flour (switch in all-purpose flour for a lighter loaf)
- 1  $\frac{1}{8}$  - 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups water
- Optional: olive oil to lightly coat the bottom of a bowl
- Optional: 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp salt; thyme, coriander, poppy or fennel seeds, pine nuts
- No leaven! Using a starter may have become common after Cato.

### The Simple Loaf

Stirring and mixing are great for the youngest family members.

- Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees for 15 mins. Put a tray with water on the bottom rack.
- Measure flour, salt, spices into a bowl and stir.
- Slowly mix in 1 cup water, then add tiny amounts until dough holds but is fairly dry.
- Knead (flatten, fold, repeat) until the dough is stretchy.
- Make a rough ball (about 5  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. diam.) and place it in a lightly oiled bowl.
- Cover the dough and let it rest for 10 mins., then knead for 2 mins.
- Place the dough ball on a floured baking tray and flatten the top to about 6  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. diam. (If dough is starting to spread, place it into an 8-inch circular pan). You are now done with a simple loaf! *Continue with wedges if you like.*
- Wedges: Using a chopstick or rounded tool, quarter the top by pressing 4 deep lines, center-outward. Add 4 more lines inside each quarter to make 8 wedges.
- Make a hole in the center of the loaf with the handle of a wooden spoon.
- Place the dough on the middle rack of the oven and bake for about 45 mins. (When the bread is done, the bottom will sound hollow when you knock on it.)
- Once the bread is out of the oven, let it cool for 30 mins. Expect a dense loaf!

**Join the Pros!** To achieve the look of city bakery bread after Cato's time, try this.

- By 79 AD, professional loaves often had a horizontal indentation around the loaf, perhaps from twine. If your dough is firm, have fun tying kitchen twine or thick string in a circle around the lower body before making wedges on top. If the dough sags . . . try next time!

**Enjoy your bread Roman-style, with cheese, olives, figs, honey . . . or any way you like.**

*Ceres and Bacchus work together, so raise a glass of wine or grape juice to the ancient gods!*

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