

Makes 1 loaf  
Prep 1 hr 20 mins, plus  
resting time; “mother”  
dough (starter): 10 days

**For the “mother”**  
2½ lb (1.1 kg) organic flour  
(ideally an old variety  
such as Tumminia,  
Perciasacchi, Russello,  
or Maiorc (see p.130); or  
emmer flour)  
½ tsp honey

**For the bread dough**  
1⅔ cups (200 g) fine durum  
wheat semolina flour, or  
all-purpose flour  
1⅔ cups (200 g) organic  
flour (ideally an old  
variety such as Tumminia,  
Perciasacchi, Russello,  
or Maiorca, (see p.130); or  
emmer flour), plus extra  
for dusting  
3½ oz (100 g) “mother”

**For the emulsion**  
2 tsp (12 g) sea salt  
¼ tsp (20 g) mild, moderately  
fruity olive oil (I use  
Tonda Iblea), plus extra  
to serve

## Sourdough bread with an Italian “mother”

*Pane con lievito madre*

To make the “mother,” knead ¾ cup (100 g) of the flour with the honey and ¼ cup (50 ml) of lukewarm water until you have a smooth dough. Shape into a ball and use a sharp knife to slice a cross on the top. (Don’t cut all the way through.) Transfer to a glass bowl, cover with a damp kitchen towel (not plastic wrap!), and leave to proof for 48 hours in a warm, sheltered place. Keep the kitchen towel damp.

Feed and replenish the dough for at least 10 days in total. To do this, knead 3½ oz (100 g) of the mother dough (use the innermost part) with ¾ cup (100 g) flour and ¼ cup (50 ml) of lukewarm water until you have a smooth dough. Shape this and leave to proof as described above. Repeat this process 3 more times until a total of 10 days have passed.

On the 10th day, feed the “mother” dough as usual and leave it covered to proof in a warm place for 3 hours, then transfer to the refrigerator for 12 hours.

On the 11th day (the day when you will bake the bread), take 3½ oz (100 g) of the “mother” dough from the refrigerator and leave it out to come to room temperature for 1 hour. Leave the rest of the “mother” in the refrigerator until the next baking day, remembering to feed it once a week as described above.

To make the bread, mix both types of flour with 1½ cups (350 ml) of lukewarm water in a bowl. Cover with a kitchen towel and leave to proof for 1 hour. Use a food processor to knead this together with the “mother” dough on a medium setting for 6–7 minutes.

To make the emulsion, mix all the ingredients with 3 tbsp (40 ml) of lukewarm water. Knead this gradually into the dough, allowing it to absorb the liquid before pouring in more emulsion. Knead for 5 minutes.

Cover with a damp kitchen towel and leave to proof for 5 hours in a warm, sheltered place. Carefully knead the dough into a ball on a lightly floured work surface. Transfer this ball into a well-floured proofing basket, cover, and leave to rest for another 2 hours.

Place a cast-iron skillet with a lid on the lowest shelf in the oven and preheat to 475°F (240°C), or as high as it will go.

Place the loaf on a sheet of parchment paper and transfer the bread on this and into the cast-iron skillet. Close the lid. Reduce the temperature to 425°F (220°C) and bake for 45 minutes. Remove the lid and continue baking for 15 minutes. Leave to cool on a wire rack, then slice. Serve with olive oil and salt.

