

Created by: Edward F. Nesta

Mark Fiorentino Baking Bread - New York Culinary Experience - The International Culinary

I learned the art of working with dough to create hearty breads, delectable pizzas, crispy baguettes, and more with **Chef Boulanger Mark Fiorentino** of [Daniel](#) as part of the fourth annual [New York Culinary Experience](#) hosted by [New York magazine](#) and [The International Culinary Center](#).

I had the opportunity to roll and bake dough with Chef Mark Fiorentino on April 28, 2012, as part of the two-day New York Culinary Experience hosted by New York magazine and The International Culinary Center in New York. During the class, I learned the art of working with dough to proof it, roll it, tuck it, cut it, and bake it so that it is crispy on the outside, and soft and chewy on the inside, over the course of 3 hours and 15 minutes.



Edward Nesta and Chef Mark Fiorentino

I have always loved bread from my early days of going with my parents to the bakery to pick up a couple of fresh warm loaves of Italian bread knowing that one loaf would be hungrily torn into pieces and eaten on the way home. When I got older, I loved to play with dough and enjoyed making dough for pizzas and breadsticks. So, when the opportunity to work side-by-side with Chef Boulanger Mark Fiorentino and expand my repertoire to include baguettes, epi baguettes and other delectable dough products, I was excited.

We started with a basic but versatile dough that required just the basic dough ingredients of bread flour, water, yeast, and salt. From this dough, we proceeded to make pizza dough, which I took home for later use, epi baguettes, boules, and rolls filled with salted butter cubes or sausage.

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Hot Epi Baguettes

The class was logically divided into two sessions; one session involved mixing and proofing the dough, and the other dealt with working the dough to create the final product [epi baguettes, boules, or rolls]. To read the recipes and draw on the exact measurements of ingredients we used, please read [Chef Mark Fiorentino's recipe](#) in the [Chefs' Recipes](#) section. Here are some hints and techniques to complement the recipes when you are making your dough.

Mixing and proofing the dough

Chef Fiorentino stressed that when making any dough that the secret ingredient that he was taught early on in his training was the ingredient of time. When proofing your dough, time is essential for the ingredients to meld together.

Chef also provided some helpful hints for working with dough. One critical tip was to make sure that you work all of your flour into the dough thoroughly before letting it rest. If you add a lot of flour after it has rested, then you will have flour mixed within the dough at different stages of saturation and this will affect the dough's ability to rise, as well as the final taste.



Dough Proofing

We mixed the flour and water and rolled the dough until it was a bit sticky to the hands and a bit sticky on the wood surface. We worked the dough until it reached the consistency we were looking for, a bit sticky but not too wet. An essential tool when working with dough is the dough-scraping tool, which makes it so easy to get all the sticky dough off your work surface.

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Edward working with bread scrapper

The next step required rest, not for me, but for the dough, as we included the key ingredient of time into the process; a wood surface is excellent to let dough rest on. Make sure that you cover the dough with a bowl or a sheet of plastic so that it does not dry out while it is proofing.



Edward covering dough

With the dough set aside for 20 minutes, we mixed our yeast, salt, and water. We then mixed the dough into the wet mixture and kneaded it for 6 - 8 minutes until all of the liquid mixture was absorbed into the dough, adding a little flour as needed.

Working the dough to create your finished product

A few of the techniques used to create our finished product were different ways to roll the dough and different ways to place cuts in the dough to exact different looks on the finished product.

With respect to rolling the dough, you want to use even pressure when rolling with your fingers and typically, you place the pressure as you roll the dough away from you. When you are making epi baguettes, you want to pat a piece of dough flat and then fold the farthest piece of the dough about a quarter pulling it towards you and pressing down on the folded edge, you will then reverse the dough and fold it in the same

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fashion. The folding creates air pockets within the finished product, which will make the bread airy and chewy on the inside. You will want to place the fold of your dough on the bottom of the baking sheet.



Chef Fiorentino showing Edward how to roll dough

When making the rolls, we patted a smaller piece of dough flat into a square shape and then stretched the ends of two of the corners and folded them in the middle, you then stretch the other two corners and fold them into the middle. The next trick is for you to stretch the dough at an angle and insert flavored butter, sausage, or whatever you wish to insert into the dough, and then fold the dough, and you will do this one more time stretching the dough on the other angle and folding it into the middle. This will create an airy center and will help to hold your filling. For the rolls, you will leave the folds on the top when placing them on the baking sheet.

Another great technique the Chef Fiorentino showed the class was how to use the bread lame, an extremely sharp cutting blade. Chef Fiorentino explained that when using the blade you need to cut at a sharp angle with a flick of the wrist, but not too deep. You want to extract a specific result, thus think of the breads that have that distinct open top that looks like the bread ruptured; that was achieved by a using the lame to cut a smooth yet not too deep slice in the bread so that it will expand when baked. During our class we practiced our slicing on different epi baguettes and boules, regardless of the resultant look, they tasted fantastic.



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Chef Fiorentino using bread lame to make cuts in dough

Read the [Chefs' Recipes](#) section where **Chef Boulanger Mark Fiorentino** graciously shares his recipes for making dough for baguettes.

Read about other classes in the [Gastronomy](#) section and interviews and recipes from the other classes in the [Chefs' Recipes](#) section.

Visit **Luxury Experience's Facebook** page to listen to interviews with the chefs and see more photos from the event. www.Facebook.com/LuxuryExperience

To attend the **New YorkCulinary Experience 2013**, please visit the **New Yorkmagazine** website: www.NYmag.com/nyce.

Regarding taking classes throughout the year with the excellent chef instructors at **The International Culinary Center** at their New York, California, or Italian Campuses, please visit the website: www.InternationalCulinaryCenter.com.

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