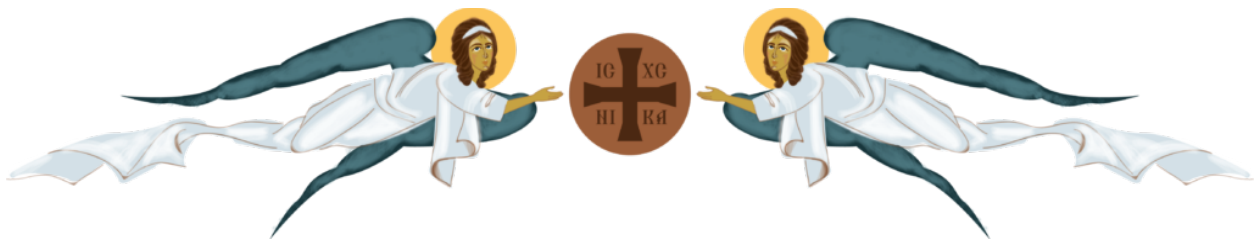


First Edition

FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT

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# PROSPHORA BAKING



# 01. INTRODUCTION

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*"I believe prosphora baking has changed me, and I believe it is another way of entering into communion with God, just as the iconographer would say of his art."*

- FR. GEORGE AQUARO, "A NOTE ABOUT PROSPHORA PRAYERS"

## HOW TO USE THIS CLASS    THINGS TO REMEMBER

This is a guide for those who have never made a loaf of prosphora before, for those who are trying to figure out why their loaves are not coming out the way they want, and for those who would like to learn more about the science behind prosphora baking

Baking is an art as well as a science, and that means just because you follow the guidelines, recipes, and techniques provided, it does not mean your loaves will turn out exactly like the next prosphora baker's loaves. As you are about to learn, there are a great many factors at play when baking prosphora.

There is not one single way to make prosphora. The recipe and technique I am about to share may vary from what you were taught. If the way you were taught consistently produces loaves of prosphora that your parish priest approves, then by all means, continuing using that recipe and those techniques! All that I share reflects what I have been taught, the research I have done, and putting all of that into decades of practice.

## THINGS YOU MIGHT NEED

### CLASS WORKBOOK

This is your printable PDF filled with the traditions and science behind prosphora baking, techniques, recipe, and instructions.

### KITCHEN EQUIPMENT

You do not absolutely *need* all that I list for baking prosphora. However, I am going to explain why I use what I use and you can decide from there.

### INGREDIENTS

Universally, the ingredients remain the same for a loaf of prosphora: water, flour, yeast, and salt. Although, salt is the only optional ingredient. Some prosphora bakers use salt, some do not. Traditionally, nothing else is acceptable to be in prosphora.

While prosphora can only contain these four ingredients, there are variations on the amounts and techniques of using them. Through this course, I will explain why I use the ingredients I do and why I measure and heat them the way I do.

## 02. EXPANDING OUR KNOWLEDGE

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*"I found no ultimate truths... There is not an absolute rule about bread stamps and their methods although there are definitely common symbolism and uses."*

- GEORGE GALAVARIS, "BREAD AND THE LITURGY"

### A NOTE BEFORE BEGINNING

I spent several years asking priests, "What do you want and not want in a loaf of prosphoro?" There were some varying responses, but the common responses were:

- a stamp they could see
- a dense loaf with tiny, even bubbles throughout
- they did not want any large air pockets in the loaf, especially under the stamp
- neither undercooked nor overcooked

It is also worth noting that not every priest is the same. Some priests are more specific than others in what they want in a loaf of prosphoro. Please talk to your parish priest and always be open to critiques that will help you improve, especially if you are new to bread baking.

Without a doubt, there is an element of craftsmanship involved with baking a loaf of prosphoro. In an effort to really understand this craft, I asked my husband if he wanted to learn how to make prosphora with me. I did this for two reasons: 1) In order for me to teach him how to make it, I had to make sure I understood and could explain the process to him. 2) I knew he would enjoy a scientific approach to baking with me, and in turn, he would help me develop a methodology that would produce more consistent results time and again.

Throughout with course, I will be explaining not only how to bake these special loaves of bread but also why I chose to use the techniques I've come to use.

Everything within this tutorial is a result of those who have taught me, the research I have done, and years of hands-on, personal experience.

### RESOURCES

*Bread and the Liturgy*  
by George Galavaris

*Prosphoro and Artos*  
by Stavroula Stamati and  
Dimitra Stavrou - A good  
resource with a hearty amount of  
history, however we have found  
several inconsistencies in this  
book.

*How Baking Works*  
by Paula Figoni

*Crust and Crumb*  
by Peter Reinhart

YouTube: search for  
"prosphora", "prosphoro", or  
"prosfora"

Online: search for  
"prosphora", "prosphoro", or  
"prosfora"

For more recipes and info:  
[www.prosphora.org](http://www.prosphora.org)

Ask your priest who makes  
the best prosphora in your  
parish, then ask that person  
if they will teach you!

## 03. TERMINOLOGY

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*“Generally speaking, prosphora refers to the bread offering. In addition, the bread was not only a gift for use in the Liturgy, but it was also a gift to the Church to feed the priest and the poor.”*

- PHYLLIS MESHEL ONEST, “PROSPHORA: AN OFFERING TO GOD”

- **Prosphora:** means “offering.” Prosphoro is singular and refers to a single loaf of bread. Prosphora is plural and refers to two or more loaves of bread. Prosphoron is an older form of prosphoro, but has predominantly fallen out of modern use.
- **Yeast Starter:** (for the recipe provided) 3 tbs flour, 3 tsp yeast, 1/2 cup warm water
- **Gluten:** is formed when water is added to flour containing two proteins called glutenin and gliadin. Gluten requires mixing in order for it to form a strong, continuous network, hence the need to knead dough.
- **Sponge:** the uncooked dough
- **Crust:** the outer layer of baked bread
- **Crumb:** the inner part of the bread that is under the crust after it has been baked
- **Bulk Fermentation:** the first time we let the dough rise; develops flavor
- **Benching:** letting the dough balls rest for a minimum of 5 minutes after the bulk fermentation and before rolling them out to be stamped
- **Proofing:** the second rise after we have stamped the bread before putting it in the oven; for lightness and texture and also to allow the dough to spring back up after we stamped it with a prosphoro seal
- **Antidoron:** means “instead of the gifts.” It is blessed bread (not consecrated) handed out by the priest after liturgy. Antidoron, as the name implies, was intended for those who did not receive Holy Communion, however this practice has changed over time and now all present at the Divine Liturgy receive antidoron at the end.



## 04. TOOLS

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*“The prosphoro teaches us patience, it teaches us that everything in life goes through a state of fermentation... This teaches us a lot about the mystical way in which everything in life works: with patience and in a slow, quiet, inconspicuous, discreet way.”*

- STAMATI & STAVROU, PROSPHORO AND ARTOS

### WHAT DO I NEED?

- prosphoro stamp
- aluminum baking sheet or two 9 inch aluminum cake pans
- large bowl
- sifter, if not weighing your flour
- measuring cups and spoons
- one skewer
- kitchen towel
- pot or kettle for heating water

### WHAT WOULD BE NICE TO HAVE?

- large kitchen mixer with a dough hook (at least 6 qt)
- Instant read food thermometer
- Food scale
- Six quart food container with measurement lines
- Rolling pin
- Stainless steel food scraper
- Apron
- Icon of the Theotokos, Sts. Spyridon and Nicodemus the Prosphora Bakers, or St. Euphrosynos the Cook

## 05. THE SCIENCE OF PROSPHORA BAKING

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*“The custom of stamping the bread with a stamp or a mould was continued by the Christians, who, judging from extant examples, seemed to prefer stamps (whose dimensions vary from 3 to 21 cm) to moulds.”*

- GEORGE GALAVARIS, “BREAD AND THE LITURGY”

### BAKEWARE

Aluminum bakeware will conduct heat better than stainless steel. The darker the bakeware, the more likely it will be for you to cook your bread faster, with the potential to burn it. Non-stick coatings and silicone bakeware are poor conductors of heat.

For prosphora baking, the best choice is to use a light colored, heavy weight aluminum baking sheets or cake pans.

Do *not* pick the cheapest baking sheet or cake pans available. They will be thin and will burn the bottom of your loaves easily. Pick a medium priced aluminum baking sheet or cake pans instead.

### FOOD THERMOMETER

An ideal temperature for water to activate your yeast is between 105-115 degrees F.

I once had a prosphora baker share her trick for getting the water the right temperature for the yeast. She would turn on the tap water and the second she yanked her hand out, that is the water she used for her prosphora. I used this trick for at least 15 years with success every single time. (I killed my yeast more times than I can count before this trick.)

Now, the problem with this trick is that not every person is going to have the same pain tolerance. There are some who would yank out their hand too early and others who might not think that particular temperature was too hot.

When I learned that the optimal water temperature for yeast was between 105-115 degrees F, I bought an inexpensive food thermometer and had my husband hold it under the running tap water. I told him to tell me the temperature of the water when I yanked my hand out - it was 107 degrees F.

Even though I know that I can feel the correct temperature for the tap water, I continue to use the food thermometer every single time I bake prosphora. Why? 1) I don't need to be wasting water waiting for the tap to reach the right temperature. I use an electric tea kettle to heat up my water now. 2) We have a water filtration system hooked up to our kitchen sink. As you'll learn further on, minerals in tap water can interfere with bread baking and will introduce another variable into your bread baking.

So, is it absolutely necessary to have a food thermometer? No. But...I highly recommend it because if you boil your water and then let it cool for a bit, it's extremely likely that the water will still be too hot and you'll kill the yeast. Water boils at 212 degrees F. Yeast begins to die at 135 degrees F.

## MEASURING

Flour settles over time and when this happens there is less air between the flour particles. This becomes problematic for bakers because with less air between the particles, more flour is needed to fill a measuring cup.

This problem can be overcome by a baker sifting the flour first, but this is an extra step in the process that many people want to avoid or skip altogether.

Thus, most bakers weigh their ingredients instead. Weighing is much more accurate and produces more consistent results.

This is why I recommend using a food scale when measuring your flour. Again, is it absolutely necessary? No. But...it will lessen your variables and too little or too much flour will definitely impact the end result of your loaf of prosphora. Until you have an eye for the correct consistency of the dough, it's better to measure your flour more precisely.

If you are not going to weigh your flour, you need to sift it before measuring it.

## WHICH FLOUR SHOULD I USE?

Allow me to briefly explain the different types of wheat and flour available at the store so that you can better understand why I chose the flour I use for making prosphora.

**Hard wheat** is typically used for yeast-raised baked goods. It forms strong gluten strands, absorbs water better than soft wheat, and also requires more kneading to fully develop the gluten.

**Soft wheat** is typically used for pastries such as cakes and cookies. It forms weaker gluten strands because it is lower in protein. (Remember that the proteins glutenin and gliadin are the proteins that form gluten once they are mixed with water and kneaded.)

**Bread flour** is made from hard wheat and has a high protein content. It is typically used for baking bread because the protein content in the wheat can hold up to the stretching and fermentation that occurs when using yeast. It is also going to produce a dense and chewy product.

**Cake flour** is made from soft wheat and has a lower protein content and thus weaker gluten. It is typically used for making cakes and delicate pastries. You do *not* want to use cake flour for prosphora.

**All-purpose flour** is a mixture of hard wheat and soft wheat making it ideal for the home baker who only uses it occasionally.

There are four things to keep in mind when choosing which brand of flour and which type of flour you are going to buy at the store for prosphora:

1. Look at the list of ingredients on the bag or on the company's website. Some companies will say their flour is bread flour but it's actually all-purpose flour or their all-purpose flour is actually cake flour.
2. You want UNBLEACHED flour. First, the chlorine will weaken the gluten in your dough and also interfere with fermentation because of its antimicrobial properties. (Let's face it, we use bleach to kill bacteria we don't want, but bleach itself is not selective in the types of bacteria it kills. We don't want it killing the yeast.) Secondly, we want our ingredients as pure as possible for prosphora.
3. Are you using a mixer with a dough hook? Then I recommend King Arthur Unbleached Bread Flour.
4. Are you going to knead by hand? Then I recommend King Arthur Unbleached All-Purpose Flour.

## WHICH YEAST SHOULD I USE?

There are three basic types of yeast for bread baking:

- **Active Dry Yeast** - The optimal water temperature for activating this yeast is between 105-115 degrees F. This is the type of yeast I have chosen to use when making prosphora.
- **Compressed Yeast** - is a favorite among professional bakeries. It needs to be dissolved in twice its weight of warm water at 100 degrees F. Wild yeast cultures, that need to be continually fed, would also fit into this category. They require a bit more time and effort, but are an option for the artisan baker.
- **Instant Yeast** - should *not* be activated by water beforehand. This yeast should be added directly to the dough. This is because the rod-shaped granules are extremely porous and will easily hydrate right in the dough. You need less yeast when using instant and do not need to pre-warm your water before mixing.

Professional and artisan bakers enjoy using compressed or wild yeast cultures. You need to keep in mind that using this type of yeast requires some knowledge of how to use these as well as a bit more time and effort on the part of the baker. If you are the occasional prosphora baker and don't make homemade bread yourself, this is probably not the best option for you.

Instant yeast requires the least amount of work for the baker. You add it directly to your dough and do not need to warm your water to activate it because it is extremely porous. The thing you need to remember though is that it is critical to knead the dough enough to get the yeast going and strengthen the gluten. If you don't knead the dough enough using this yeast, your prosphora will not come out correctly.

I use the active dry yeast because it's more of a middle of the road option for me. I can activate the yeast and know it's going to work but it's also low maintenance.

Is it more correct to use a wild yeast starter? You're going to get differing opinions on this.

First, it's important to understand what is referred to as "leaven" or "levain" (French) before going further.

A leaven is any leavening agent that will provide volume and lightness to your baked good. Leavening agents include: steam, air, yeast, baking soda, and baking powder.

What are yeast? Yeast are single-celled, sugar eating fungi used in fermentation. It is through the process of the yeast eating the sugar, digesting it, and then expelling carbon dioxide (called alcoholic fermentation) that the dough rises. When the dough has been

properly kneaded, the dough is elastic and stretchable due to the chains formed by the gluten in the dough. The carbon dioxide gets trapped in the dough and causes it to rise. This is the primary leavening agent in prosphora. (Steam also plays a small role as a natural part of the baking process.)

Secondly, it's important to understand what the difference is between a wild yeast starter and active dry or instant yeast.

A wild yeast starter was acquired by yeasts that occur naturally in nature. The book, *Prosphora and Artos*, explains a process of making your own starter using the yeast that naturally occurs on basil. In order to make your own from scratch, it will take several days to get it started before you can use it for making prosphora. In the book, they explain a process which uses the blessed basil you receive at the feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross to use for your yeast starter. This type of starter is what has been used throughout much of history and is favored by those who like to make things in an artisanal fashion, but the yeast is less concentrated than the store bought version and will require more fermentation time. There is the potential of capturing bad bacteria as well in this process, so this method does require a certain level of skill and knowledge before commencing.

You can buy active dry and instant yeast at most grocery stores. This yeast is the same yeast you would find from a wild yeast starter. The difference is in how it is processed. In laboratories, scientists will extract a healthy strain of yeast and place it in a test tube with the necessary nutrients to enable a healthy growth. As the yeast reproduces, the content of the test tube will be transferred to larger and larger containers with additional nutrients called a wort. When the yeast is ready to be harvested, the scientists will separate the yeast from the wort. From here, they can dehydrate the yeast and get it ready for packaging. We re-hydrate it and wake it up when we add warm water to it.

Returning to our question - Is it more correct to use a wild yeast starter instead of yeast from the store? Both are yeast. The difference is in how you acquire them.

Let me ask you this - If you think it is more correct to use a wild yeast starter for prosphora instead of prepared yeast from the store, do you also think it's more correct to grind your own wheat for flour instead of buying it pre-packaged from the store?

I think it really comes down to a preference for whether you'd prefer to use a wild yeast starter or active dry yeast, rather than one is better than the other.

## CONTROLLING GLUTEN

Your ratios of water and flour will have a direct impact on your dough's gluten. Until you can recognize, from experience, when the dough looks ready for bulk fermentation, it is best to use the ratios provided in the recipe.

If you are using **hard water** from your tap, the minerals in the water will strengthen the gluten. This will make your dough extra bulky and elastic. If you have hard water, you will need to add a little extra water to compensate for it or use a softer flour than you were before. \*You will know if you have hard water if you see a build-up of minerals on your dishes after they've been washed in the dishwasher.

If you are using **soft water** from your tap, your water will tend to have less minerals and cause your dough to be slack and sticky. \*If you have a water softener for your home, you might want to use bottled water when making prosphora, if you find that your loaves are not coming out the way they should because most bottled waters have some minerals added back to them for flavor.

## WEATHER & SEASONS

Where you live will also have an impact on your dough. Ratios for the recipe will have to be adjusted to compensate for your current climate.

A prosphora baker in Portland, Oregon might have to regularly add slightly more flour to their recipe because of the high humidity.

While a prosphora baker in Phoenix, Arizona will probably have to increase the water for their recipe because of low humidity.

Temperature will also play a factor during both your bulk fermentation and your proofing stages. Your dough may rise faster in the summer and slower in the winter due to temperature differences.

## 06. PRAYERS

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*“For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Then they said to Him, ‘Lord, give us this bread always.’ And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life.’”*

- JOHN 6:33-35

While it is commonly agreed upon that prayers should be said in conjunction with the preparation of prosphora, the prayers themselves vary from baker to baker.

If you have been taught certain prayers to say while making prosphora, by all means, continuing saying those prayers. If you are looking for some guidance for prayers as you begin to learn about baking prosphora, here are some of the ways others prosphora bakers pray while working:

- Say the prayer “Before Any Task” before beginning, then finish by saying the prayer “After Any Task”
- Say the Jesus Prayer the entire time working on the prosphora
- Start and finish with the Trisagion prayers and also read the Psalms while waiting for the dough during the bulk fermentation and proofing stages
- Have an icon of the Theotokos, Sts. Spyridon and Nicodemus, or St. Euphrosynos the Cook near your work area with incense burning in your small, family censer

These are not the only prayers that can be said while making prosphora. Some bakers will feel strongly about precisely which prayers to say and there is nothing wrong with this. The thing to remember here is that there isn’t a prayer book specifically for prosphora baking, as nice as that might be.

We are preparing an offering to God in our loaf of bread, transforming the gifts He has given to us and offering them back to Him.

When you bring your prosphora to your parish priest, you can include two lists of names for your priest to commemorate during the service. The first list will have names of those who are Orthodox and still living. (Label that list: “Living”) The second list will have names of those who are deceased. (Label this list with a cross at the top)



## 07. PROSPHORA: BYZANTINE STYLE

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*“As any frequent prospora baker has discovered, batches almost never turn out the same. That inconsistency alone should serve to keep the prospora baker in constant prayer during the baking!”*

- DIVINE ASCENT MAGAZINE, AUGUST 2000



### RECIPE:

3 tsp Active Dry Yeast

3 cups Water (optimally heated between 105-115 degrees F)

3 tbs King Arthur Unbleached Bread Flour (for starter)

1152g King Arthur Unbleached Bread Flour (9 cups)

Yields Two 9 inch Byzantine loaves



### STEP 1:

Let's get the yeast activated! The optimal temperature for activating the dry yeast is between 105-115 degrees F. Yeast dies when the water is hotter than 140 degrees F. If you boil your water, it will definitely be too hot! Water boils at 212 degrees F. If you are just beginning and don't have much experience with activating yeast, I highly recommend buying a digital food thermometer.



In a small bowl, add 3 tbs King Arthur Unbleached Bread Flour and 3 tsp active dry yeast. (Note: 1 packet of yeast contains 2 1/4 tsp yeast, so it won't be enough.)

Then add 1/2 cup of water that is heated between 105-115 degrees F. Stir and let it sit for about 15-30 minutes, until you see lots of bubbles and it becomes somewhat fluffy.

You will add the remaining 2 1/2 cups of water in a little bit.



### STEP 2:

Weigh 1152g of flour on a food scale.

We took the flour measurement from the *Bread Baker's Apprentice*:  $128\text{g} = 1\text{ cup}$ ;  $128 \times 9\text{ cups} = 1152\text{g}$  of flour



### STEP 3: MIXER WITH DOUGH HOOK

Add 2 1/2 cups water, heated between 105-115 degrees F to your mixing bowl.

Add your yeast starter to the mixing bowl.

Turn on your mixer to the first or second setting.

Add your flour slowly. You need to mix it for 15-20 minutes on the lowest setting. (Bread flour wants to be kneaded!)



### STEP 3: KNEADING BY HAND

In a large bowl, add 2 1/2 cups water, heated between 105-115 degrees F. Then add your yeast starter to the water.

Slowly add some of your flour and stir with a wooden spoon. When the mixture is too hard to mix with a spoon, then turn out the dough onto a heavily floured counter.

Start kneading your dough. Add more flour as it gets incorporated or starts to get too sticky. Knead for approximately 20 minutes. You really have to incorporate the flour. If you don't knead the dough enough, it will cause problems.



#### STEP 4:

After the dough has been properly kneaded, then place it in a large bowl or container, cover with plastic wrap or a kitchen towel, and wait until it doubles in size.

Note: Bulk fermentation might take less time in the summer, when it's warmer and more time in the winter, when it's colder. On average, it usually takes about 1 hour.



#### STEP 5:

After the dough has doubled in size, then knead it again until you can no longer find any air pockets.

Divide it in half, roll into two balls, then cover and let it rest (called benching) for 5 minutes. This will allow the gluten to relax and take the stamp better.



#### STEP 6:

Lightly flour the inside of two 9 inch cake pans

Do **not** use any oils, non-stick sprays, or beeswax of any kind in your pans! There are several problems that occur when you do this: It makes it very difficult for the priests because the bread wants to float on top of the oil in the chalice. It leaves an oily film in the chalice and the priests do not use soap to clean the chalice. Just don't do it.



### STEP 7:

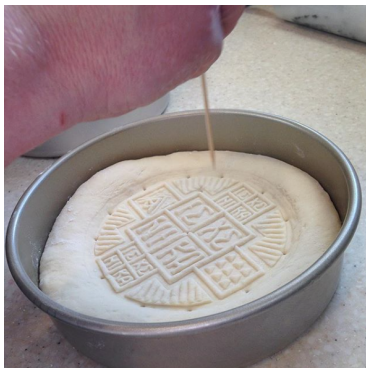
Lightly rub flour on both sides of the dough ball and then roll out with a rolling pin to about 9 inches in diameter. (Hold your cake pan over the top of it to check the size. With time, you'll just know when it looks the right size.)



### STEP 8:

Then place the dough in the cake pan. Sprinkle a little bit of flour on top of the dough in the pan and rub it around the entire top.

Next, push your prosphora stamp into the dough. Don't be afraid to put your weight into it, but at the same time, not too much because it will create an air pocket under the stamp. If you pull off the stamp and you can barely see the imprint, re-knead the dough and try again.



### STEP 9:

The placement and number of holes poked into the stamp, vary from prosphora baker to prosphora baker.

The holes allow the steam to escape the bread while baking and preserve the stamp. Most prosphora bakers will poke at least 5 holes in the bread (5 wounds of Christ) - 4 at each corner of the center square (the lamb) and 1 in the center point between IC XC NI KA).

I also poke 12 (12 disciples) around the outside of the stamp because my loaves are larger. (If you are making smaller loaves, you don't need to poke the outer 12 holes.)



### STEP 10:

Let the dough proof (rise a 2nd time) for 20 minutes after stamping it and poking holes in the stamp.

Then bake at 350 degrees for 35-40 minutes. (You risk losing the stamp by baking it at a higher temperature because the dough will expand more rapidly under the increased heat.)

Let the prosphora cool on cooling racks for a minimum of 3 hours before placing in a plastic bag. (If you put the bread in a plastic bag before the bread has **completely cooled**, condensation will accumulate in the bag and make the bread soggy. You will not have a happy priest if that happens.)



## 08. PROSPHORA: RUSSIAN STYLE

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*“As any frequent prospora baker has discovered, batches almost never turn out the same. That inconsistency alone should serve to keep the prospora baker in constant prayer during the baking!”*

- DIVINE ASCENT MAGAZINE, AUGUST 2000



### RECIPE:

3 tsp Active Dry Yeast

3 cups Water (optimally heated between 105-115 degrees F)

3 tbs King Arthur Unbleached Bread Flour (for starter)

1152g King Arthur Unbleached Bread Flour (9 cups)

Quantities will vary when making Russian loaves, depending on the size you are making.



### STEP 1:

Let's get the yeast activated! The optimal temperature for activating the dry yeast is between 105-115 degrees F. Yeast dies when the water is hotter than 140 degrees F. If you boil your water, it will definitely be too hot! Water boils at 212 degrees F. If you are just beginning and don't have much experience with activating yeast, I highly recommend buying a digital food thermometer.



In a small bowl, add 3 tbs King Arthur Unbleached Bread Flour and 3 tsp active dry yeast. (Note: 1 packet of yeast contains 2 1/4 tsp yeast, so it won't be enough.)

Then add 1/2 cup of water that is heated between 105-115 degrees F. Stir and let it sit for about 15-30 minutes, until you see lots of bubbles and it becomes somewhat fluffy.

You will add the remaining 2 1/2 cups of water in a little bit.



### STEP 2:

Weigh 1152g of flour on a food scale.

We took the flour measurement from the *Bread Baker's Apprentice*:  $128\text{g} = 1\text{ cup}$ ;  $128 \times 9\text{ cups} = 1152\text{g}$  of flour



### STEP 3: MIXER WITH DOUGH HOOK

Add 2 1/2 cups water, heated between 105-115 degrees F to your mixing bowl.

Add your yeast starter to the mixing bowl.

Turn on your mixer to the first or second setting.

Add your flour slowly. You need to mix it for 15-20 minutes on the lowest setting. (Bread flour wants to be kneaded!)



### STEP 3: KNEADING BY HAND

In a large bowl, add 2 1/2 cups water, heated between 105-115 degrees F. Then add your yeast starter to the water.

Slowly add some of your flour and stir with a wooden spoon. When the mixture is too hard to mix with a spoon, then turn out the dough onto a heavily floured counter.

Start kneading your dough. Add more flour as it gets incorporated or starts to get too sticky. Knead for approximately 20 minutes. You really want to incorporate the flour. If you don't knead the dough enough, it will cause problems.



#### STEP 4:

After the dough has been properly kneaded, then place it in a large bowl or container, cover with plastic wrap or a kitchen towel, and wait until it doubles in size.

Note: Bulk fermentation might take less time in the summer, when it's warmer and more time in the winter, when it's colder.



#### STEP 5:

After the dough has doubled in size, then knead it again until you can no longer find any air pockets.

Divide it in half, roll into two balls, then cover and let it rest (called benching) for 5 minutes. This will allow the gluten to relax and take the stamp better.



#### STEP 6:

Lightly flour a large baking sheet or use parchment paper

Do **not** use any oils, non-stick sprays, or beeswax of any kind on your baking sheets! There are several problems that occur when you do this: It makes it very difficult for the priests because the bread wants to float on top of the oil in the chalice. It leaves an oily film in the chalice and the priests do not use soap to clean the chalice. Just don't do it.

Lightly rub flour on both sides of the dough ball and then roll out with a rolling pin until fairly thin.

Find a biscuit cutter that is the same size (or as close as possible) to your prosphoro stamp. This is the one that will be used for your top layer.

Select a biscuit cutter two sizes bigger than the top layer. This will be used for the bottom portion.





### STEP 7:

Cut out all of your bottom portions and place them on your baking sheet.

Then cut out one top portion, stamp it with your prosphoro stamp, rub water on the coordinating bottom portion (it will glue the two halves together), and then place your top portion on top of the bottom portion.

Repeat until all of your loaves are done.

Note: You will need a minimum of 5 loaves of prosphora (5 loaves commemorating feeding the 5000), but make sure to ask your priest how many he wants from you.



### STEP 8:

Poke 5 holes in your dough (5 wounds of Christ) using a skewer or toothpick as pictured in the photo to the left. The holes allow the steam to escape the bread while baking and preserve the stamp.

Let your loaves proof (2nd rise) for 20 minutes.

You may need to work in smaller batches if your first loaf is proofing far longer than 20-30 minutes. This is why I suggested splitting the dough into two balls during the benching stage so you could have two separate trays, if needed.



### STEP 9:

Then bake at 350 degrees for 20-22 minutes. (You risk losing the stamp by baking it at a higher temperature because the dough will expand more rapidly under the increased heat.)

Let the prosphora cool on cooling racks for a minimum of 1 hour before placing in a plastic bag. (If you put the bread in a plastic bag before the bread has **completely cooled**, condensation will accumulate in the bag and make the bread soggy. You will not have a happy priest if that happens.)

WRITTEN BY  
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2018

I would like to thank my husband for the countless hours he listened to me talk about bread and his willingness to learn how to make prosphora along side of me.

Thank you to all the priests who explained to me what they were looking for in a loaf of prosphora.

I would also like to thank all of the prosphora bakers who patiently answered my questions and let me learn along side of them in their kitchens.

Any mistakes or misinformation within these pages are the sole responsibility of myself.