

## Sardinian Parchment Bread (*Pane carasau*)

2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 cup semolina, plus extra for dusting  
1 teaspoon salt  
1-¼ cups warm water

In a bowl, mix together the flour, the semolina, and the salt. Gradually add the water until you have a smooth dough that is very easy to shape, not sticky, and not stretchy or glutinous. You might need as little as a cup of water-it all depends on the flour and the weather.

Place a plaque au Jour (baking sheet) on the rack close to the bottom of the oven, and preheat the oven to 400° F for at least 20 minutes. If you are using two plaques, place one on the top rack and rotate the bread from one plaque au Jour to the other once during baking to ensure even baking and coloring.

While the oven is preheating, divide the dough into 10 small balls (or more if you want to make smaller sheets of bread or, conversely, fewer if you want to make larger ones). Cover them with a towel and let them rest for about 15 minutes. If you do not care to roll them out at this point, put the little balls of dough on a lightly floured cloth and then cover them with another cloth, also lightly floured. Put a large piece of plastic wrap on top of that. Put them somewhere cool, leave them for several hours. If you roll and bake them the next day, store them covered in the refrigerator.

On a floured surface, roll each ball to a thickness just under 1/16 of an inch. Put each round onto a heavily floured peel and slide onto the hot plaque au Jour in the oven. Bake for 2-½ minutes on one side.

When the bread surfaces begin to bubble, watch the bread constantly, as they can readily burn. Turn the rounds over and bake another 2-½ minutes. When one is a very light gold with dark highlights, remove it to a rack to cool. Continue to do this until all the rounds are finished. After the pane cool, you can stack them to save space.

Sardinian Parchment Bread will keep in perfect condition for at least 2 or 3 weeks if you keep them stored in a cool, very dry place. Put them into plastic bags, and keep them in your garage or back porch. If they are not tender and crunchy, you can "revive" them by putting them on a rack in a preheated 375° F oven for 2 to 3 minutes and then letting them cool. They should be as good as fresh.

NOTE: You can use all-purpose flour and no semolina, or all bread flour to make Sardinian Parchment Bread. Without the semolina it will not be as friabile, that is, crumbly, crunchy, tender, and very good.

Surely this bread has its roots in the very ancient past. It resembles, to some degree, Armenian cracker bread, but cracker bread is thicker and flakier. *Pane carasau* is very thin and when held up to the light is translucent and looks quite fragile. This was the bread the Sardinian shepherds took along while guiding their flocks on grazing forays. It has a rather mottled, bubbly beige surface with lots of golden areas and little dark brown or burned spots here and there.

MENU SUGGESTIONS: Use with Mixed Vegetable Stew. Sardinian Parchment Bread is a perfect palette for spreading your favorite pates or for laying on slices of semisoft cheeses. It is also a good nibbling food-tasty, healthy, satisfying, and low in calories.

WINE: Monica di Sardegna