

## Try This At Home Series

May 8, 2020



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## Craig Ponsford – Then & Now

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In 1996, I enrolled in the five-day “Artisan Baking” course at the CIA Greystone campus in St. Helena, CA. Mark Furstenberg was the scheduled instructor. I had never heard of him. Or a preferment. I thought I knew what a baguette was.

Monday morning, we were given recipe booklets and, “Oh yeah, Mark couldn’t make it. Meet your instructor. He won the gold medal at the world cup of bread baking.” There is a world cup of baking? The young guy bounding across the room won it and is going to teach us how to bake bread? Things were better than I had hoped.

On day three, we boarded a bus for a trip to the city to tour bakeries that included Grace, Metropolitan. and Acme. While we were in transit, Craig told us his story that included culinary school, fishing in Alaska, learning to bake, and charting his course to the Coupe. That talk, and his effusive joy of baking proved to be a turning point I had blindly been preparing for.

Craig landed in Lyon to practice a week before the competition. Working with French flour was a new challenge and there was no coach on site. Fearless but concerned, he soldiered on until he encountered a baker named Dominique who explained autolysis and its benefits. It was the missing piece of the puzzle Craig needed to be competitive. He realized that the bigger lesson of kindness and sharing transcend the bakery lesson of using autolysis. The Coupe du Monde de

la Boulangerie was founded on that spirit. In turn, so was the Bread Bakers Guild of America. That spirit, which Craig displayed during the week, was the hook I didn't know I was seeking.

Craig stresses that the spirit of the baker was a greater calling for him than the bread itself. When asked if the Coupe has shifted its focus to blockbuster showpieces and complex bread designs, he says that although current competitors may employ more technology, the spirit is the same. He's been involved with every Baking Team USA at the Coupe du Monde since 1996. His axiom, "You are an imposter if you don't understand kindness and sharing as part of the craft."

The baguette Craig baked at the Coupe conformed to French law and Coupe mandates: 100% white flour, 55-60cm long, 250g weight after baking, 5-7 slashes. The hydration is listed as 65%. Unconstrained by law or rules the White to Wheat Baguette is a blend of three flours with 72% hydration.

When asked about the future, his California shrug says everything will be all right. He's been teaching bakers since 1996 and will continue to do so. Ponsford's Place in San Rafael, CA remains his laboratory, baking studio, training site, business incubator, and friend to the community.

It would be like trying to count yeast cells to imagine how many bakers around the world have been influenced by Craig. If we were to play the bakery version of six degrees of separation, Craig could be the touchstone.

Over the years, I've attended Craig's seminars and workshops and worked on projects with him. Our paths intersect often. Each time we meet, I'm a little less star struck, but just as inspired as I was the first time.

Need a little inspiration? You can follow him on Instagram.



## Baguettes

Who can overlook the baguette — a “universal” bread given to us by the French. This one is made with a preferment the origin of which is acknowledged, even by French bakers, in the name “poolish.”

### Ingredients - Final Dough

American		Metric	Baker's % <sup>1</sup>		Total Baker's % <sup>2</sup>
15 lb.		6750 g.	100	White Flour <sup>3</sup>	100
7 lb.	3.5 oz.	3250 g.	48.2	Water <sup>4</sup>	65
	7.1 oz.	200 g.	3	Salt	2
	3.8 oz.	106 g.	1.6	Yeast	1.1
14 lb.	7.1 oz.	6504 g.	96.4	Pre-ferment (Poolish)	
37 lb.	5.5 oz.	16810 g.	-	TOTAL	-

### Ingredients - Pre-ferment (Poolish)

7 lb.	3.5 oz.	3250 g.	100	Flour <sup>3</sup>	
7 lb.	3.5 oz.	3250 g.	100	Water <sup>4</sup>	
	.1 oz.	4 g.	.1	Yeast	
14 lb.	7.1 oz.	6504 g.	-	TOTAL	-

## Process

### Pre-ferment (Poolish)

Incorporate ingredients by hand or with a whisk until well blended.

Desired temperature: 70° F.

Fermentation time/temperature: 15 hours at 70° F.

Poolish is ready when it has domed slightly on the top and just begins to recede.

### Final Dough

Combine flour, water and pre-ferment on low speed; use the water to free the poolish from the container in which it fermented. Mix until well incorporated. Add the yeast, then the salt, and mix for a total of 3 minutes<sup>5</sup> on low speed and 4 minutes<sup>5</sup> on high speed. The dough should be smooth, shiny, “lively” and somewhat soft; it should come away from the sides of the bowl towards the end of the low speed mix time.

Desired dough temperature: 75° F.

Primary fermentation time: 2 hours. (Turn or punch after 1 hour.)

Divide the dough into 12 oz. (340 g.) pieces and gently pre-shape into cylinders. After 30 minutes rest, shape into baguettes.

Final proof time/temperature: 1 1/2 to 2 hours at 75° F.

Fill oven with steam before loading loaves.

Bake time/temperature: 20 to 25 minutes at 480° F.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Figures shown under “Baker’s %” are percentage of total flour weight in final dough.

<sup>2</sup> Figures shown under “Total Baker’s %” are percentage of total flour weight (final dough and pre-ferment).

<sup>3</sup> A good quality, unbleached, unbromated flour is recommended. Choose flour for good handling, taste, and performance characteristics. “High gluten” flours are not recommended.

<sup>4</sup> The amount and percentage of water will vary depending upon the absorption capacity of the flour. Adjust the amount of water to achieve the desired dough consistency.

<sup>5</sup> Mixing times are for a spiral mixer with speeds of 100 RPM Low/200 RPM High. Mixing times will vary with the speed, type, and brand of mixer, as well as with different flours and absorption levels. Adjust the times to achieve the desired dough consistency.

**White to Wheat Baguette**  
**By: Craig Ponsford**

Total Dough Weight	7000	Flour	30.00%
Yield:	20	350	

TOTAL FORMULA			Poolish		FINAL DOUGH	
Ingredients	%	Grams	%	Grams	Ingredients	Grams
<b>Total Flour</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>4014</b>		<b>1204</b>		
ABC Plus	34.00%	1365			ABC Plus	1365
Type 110	33.00%	1325	100.00%	1204	Type 110	120
Whole Yacora Rojo	33.00%	1325			Whole Yacora Rojo	1325
Water	72.00%	2890	100.00%	1204	Water	1686
Salt	2.10%	84			Salt	84
Instant Yeast	0.30%	12.0	0.100%	1.2	Instant Yeast	10.84
					Poolish	2409
<b>Totals</b>	<b>174.40%</b>	<b>7000</b>	<b>169.00%</b>	<b>2409</b>		<b>7000</b>

**Preferment**      polish

**Mixing**      Type of Mixer      Hand or upright with paddle

**Preferment**      Length of Time      12 hours  
 Temperature      75°F

**Final Dough**

**Mixing**      Type of Mixer      Spiral  
 Mix Style      Improved  
 1st Speed      3 minutes  
 2nd Speed      3 minutes  
 Dough Temp      75°F

**First Fermentation**      Length of Time      2 hours  
 Number of Folds      1 or 2  
 Timing for Folds      40 min

**Shaping**      Divide      350  
 Pre Shape      cylinders  
 Rest      20 min  
 Shape      Baguette

**Proof and Bake**      Final Proof Time      1 hour  
 Oven Type      Deck  
 Steam      yes  
 Total Bake      20-22 min  
 Temperature      475F