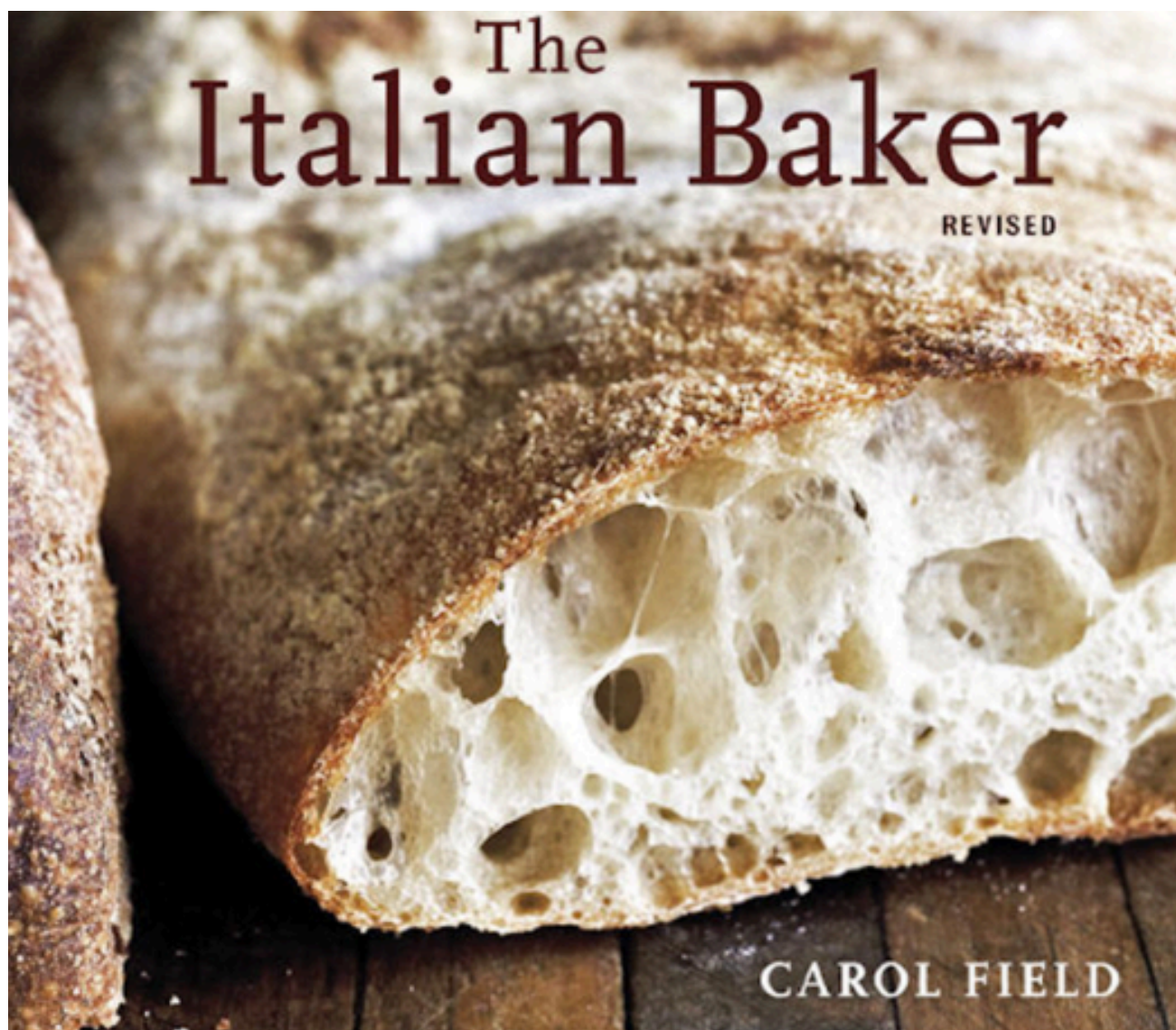


Remembering 'Italian Baker' Carol Field

Kayla Pantano (March 16, 2017)



Drawn to Italy, where she once said you can “have your culture and eat it, too,” the honorary Italian and author of celebrated cookbooks dies at 76.

Prolific cookbook author [Carol Field](#) [2], who famously introduced ciabatta and focaccia to Americans and helped popularize regional Italian cooking, died of a stroke on Friday at 76. Her death came less than three weeks after losing her husband of 56 years to cancer.



Fields learned how to cook at 21 years old after marrying her beloved husband, John. Ten years later, when living in Liguria for his work as an architect, she was exposed to the Italian kitchen and never looked back.

In awe of the bond Italians experience when eating together, she identified with the idea that family sharing lies behind every meal. Her curiosity of regional flavors grew and she eventually turned her passion for Italy into a celebration of its cuisine and culture.

After spending more than two years traveling across the country to capture local specialties and subsequently modify them, she published her first cookbook in 1985, [The Italian Baker](#) [3]. And so knocking on bakery doors late at night to observe the making of traditional breads and desserts paid off. In a groundbreaking fashion, she introduced artisanal doughs and techniques to a wider American audience, featuring recipes like Altamura bread from Puglia, chewy porous loaves from Como, and Sicilian loaves topped with sesame seeds. Once a world unknown, these breads are now commonplace. There are a plethora of tarts, cakes, and pastries for the sweet-toothed, too.

Winner of the [International Association of Culinary Professionals](#) [4] Award for best baking book, *The Italian Baker* was also named to the [James Beard](#) [5] "Baker's Dozen" list of thirteen indispensable baking books of all time. In 2011, it was republished and updated for the modern kitchen, as it continues to inspire countless professionals and home cooks to this day. Senior Editor at [The Atlantic](#) [6], [Corby Kummer](#) [7], once said, "Every bread baker, home or pro, has been influenced, knowingly or unknowingly, by Carol Field's *Italian Baker*."

Ms. Field's other books include [Celebrating Italy](#) [8] (1990), [In Nonna's Kitchen](#) [9] (1997), and [Focaccia: Simple Breads from the Italian Oven](#) [10] (2003). She also received many honors in Italy, including being awarded the [Knight in the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic](#) [11] in 2004.

Before she became an expert in Italian cuisine, Field spent most of her time in the San Francisco Bay Area in California, born in Oakland and raised in Berkeley. She received a bachelor's degree in English at [Wellesley College](#) [12] in Massachusetts and went on to work as a journalist and editor. She wrote for publications such as [Gourmet](#) [13] and [Bon Appétit](#) [14] and her style of journalistic writing is apparent in her cookbooks. While she explains how to prepare the food, she also emphasizes its cultural and historical context. In 1991, she told the [New York Times](#) [15], "I'm not interested in just writing recipes. I think of myself as a writer first."

Mrs. Field and her husband had homes in San Francisco and the Tuscan town of Pedona. As sad as her death is so soon after her husband's, a friend said, "She couldn't make it without him. They were always together, really good friends, partners in food and wine and intellectual issues. They were a blessed couple."

Her fierce love for her husband was mirrored in her love of Italy and its food. She will long be remembered for the legacy she leaves behind in her books and by her family. She is survived by her brother Peter Hart, son Matt Field, daughter Alison Field, and three grandchildren.

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- [10] <https://www.amazon.com/Focaccia-Simple-Breads-Italian-Oven/dp/0811806049>
- [11] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_Merit_of_the_Italian_Republic
- [12] <http://www.wellesley.edu>
- [13] <http://www.gourmet.com>
- [14] <http://www.bonappetit.com>
- [15] <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/05/15/garden/prose-not-recipes-now-sells-food-books.html?pagewanted=all>