Mary -- Pane di Puglia

Biga (starter)

1/4 tsp. active dried yeast
1/4 cup warm water
3/4 cup plus a bit more water, room temperature
21/2 cups all-purpose, unbleached flour

Stir yeast into warm water. Let stand for 10 mins. Stir in remaining water, then flour, 1 cup at a time. Mix with wooden spoon 3 to 4 mins. Remove to lightly oiled bowl, cover, let rise at a cool room temperature for 6 to 24 hours. The starter will triple in volume and still be wet and sticky when ready. Cover and refrigerate until use. May be frozen - defrost at room temperature.

Bread

11/4 tsp. active dried yeast
1/4 cup warm water
3 cups water, room temperature
4/5 cup biga - about 1/2 of the quantity you have made - freeze the remainder
71/2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
1 tbls. plus a bit more of salt

Stir yeast into warm water in a large bowl, let stand 10 mins. Add 3 cups water and the starter and mix well till well blended. Add flour and salt and mix, 1 to 2 mins. Turn out onto a well-floured board and knead, 3-5 mins (dough will be sticky - you will need a scraper) Place dough in lightly oiled bowl, let rise until tripled, about 3 hours. **Do not punch down**.
Turn out onto a floured surface, cut into two equal pieces, flatten dough. Roll it up lengthwise, turn 90° then flatten and roll up once again. Shape into a ball, cover with a heavy cloth, let rise until doubled, about an hour.

Bake in 450° oven for 45-50 mins.