



## BREAD



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Where would we be without bread? It's the mainstay for most of us, and it needn't be difficult to make. Follow these basic instructions to make perfect bread every time. Once you've got the hang of it, try adding a few extra ingredients, sultana's, seeds, nuts... the list is endless.

First get yourself a decent good quality bread tin, silicon is a great idea, or a baking tray for rolls and french bread. But what ever you decide to buy, make sure it fits in your oven with room to spare at the top.

To make life easier the methods below use white flour, but you can change this for whole grain etc...

## FRENCH BREAD

### INGREDIENTS

6 cups of all-purpose white flour  
1 tsp. salt  
2 cups of warm water  
3 tsp. or 1 package active dry yeast

### METHOD

In a cup or a small bowl, mix your yeast with about a 1/4 cup of warm water. The temperature of the water needs to be warm to the touch, but not hot. If the water is too warm, the yeast will be killed, while if it's too cool, it won't activate enough to make the bread rise properly. After a minute or two, the mixture should start to take on a thicker, frothy texture. If it's bubbly and thick, the yeast is activated properly and ready to go.

Mix the flour and salt together. The bowl needs to be big enough to hold all your flour and water together at once and mix it comfortably, preferably with a sturdy wooden spoon. When you've mixed the dry ingredients, you can also add the yeast, whether you're using

quick yeast or the bubbly activated wet mixture. Stir it into the flour.

Slowly add water to the bowl with one hand, while you stir the flour with the wooden spoon in your other hand. The amount of water you'll need to make the dough can be quite variable (less in humid climates) but you'll get it with some practice. Add slowly and stir, watching the dough come together. As soon as the bread starts coming together in the bowl, you should stop adding water. Reach into the bowl with flour on your hands and pull the dough together, let the dough rise for about 3 hours in a warm environment.

Turn the dough out on a well-floured kneading surface. Let the dough rest for at least five minutes. At this stage, the gluten strands are starting to form, giving the bread its wonderfully chewy texture. The strands are forming whether you're kneading or not, so it'll be easier to knead if you let the gluten do its work for a few minutes, making your job easier by bringing the bread together. Now knead the dough, pushing away from yourself, as hard as possible, keeping a light dusting of flour on the surface of the dough and the board/surface you are working on. At this point it is up to you if you go for a second rising, or even a third, but it is possible to do just the one. Now cut the dough into desired amounts and roll into what ever shape you want. It is traditional to make little cut marks in the top of your loaves, again what ever shape you want to make.

Now let your bread rest (it's had a hard day), for about 40-45 minutes. Afterwards put in a pre-heated oven at about 400 degrees F, and bake for about 30 minutes. If you want a crusty loaf, occasionally spray water on the loaves whilst cooking.

## **BEER BREAD**

Now for something even simpler. Mix together 3 cups of white flour, a half cup of sugar, and a 12 oz can of beer thoroughly in a bowl. Pour the batter into a greased loaf pan, brush with melted butter, and bake at 375 F for 45-50 minutes. It's impossible to mess up and makes a great quick accompaniment to dinner.

## **SODA BREADS**

Another you can't go wrong recipe. Mix together your dry ingredients: 4 cups of flour with a tsp each of salt and baking soda, then add several tablespoons of sugar (1 if you want savory bread, up to 4 if you want it sweeter). For the wet ingredients, mix together 2 cups of milk or buttermilk with four tablespoons of melted butter and combine everything in a bowl. Knead lightly and bake in a greased loaf pan for about an hour at 375 F.

No matter what type of bread you are making, don't forget that you can chuck in anything else you like, go mad and clean out the cupboards, fridge or fruit bowl