

Bread (No-Knead Bread)

Source: New York Times 11/8/06, Jim Lahey, Sullivan Street Bakery

Ingredients

- 3 cups All Purpose Or Bread Flour
- ¼ teaspoon Instant Yeast
- 1¼ teaspoons Salt
- Cornmeal or Wheat Bran, as needed

Method

1. In a large bowl combine flour, yeast and salt. Add 1½ cups water, and stir until blended; dough will be shaggy and sticky. Cover bowl with plastic wrap. Let dough rest at least 12 hours, preferably about 18, at warm room temperature, about 70°F.
2. Dough is ready when its surface is dotted with bubbles. Lightly flour a work surface and place dough on it; sprinkle it with a little more flour and fold it over on itself once or twice. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and let rest about 15 minutes.
3. Using just enough flour to keep dough from sticking to work surface or to your fingers, gently and quickly shape dough into a ball. Generously coat a cotton towel (not terry cloth) with flour, wheat bran or cornmeal; put dough seam side down on towel and dust with more flour, bran or cornmeal. Cover with another cotton towel and let rise for about 2 hours. When it is ready, dough will be more than double in size and will not readily spring back when poked with a finger.
4. At least a half-hour before dough is ready, heat oven to 450°F. Put a 6-8 quart heavy covered pot (cast iron, enamel, Pyrex or ceramic) in oven as it heats. When dough is ready, carefully remove pot from oven. Slide your hand under towel and turn dough over into pot, seam side up; it may look like a mess, but that is O.K. Shake pan once or twice if dough is unevenly distributed; it will straighten out as it bakes. Cover with lid and bake 30 minutes, then remove lid and bake another 15 - 30 minutes, until loaf is beautifully browned. Cool on a rack.

One 1½-pound loaf.

Add option treats - raisins, apricots, rosemary, olives etc. just before the 15-minute rest time.

Notes

2½ cups regular flour and ½ cup whole wheat is a nice variation.

I used ½ tsp yeast and 2 tsps salt and found that an improvement.

If I want to make raisin, rosemary bread, I add enough raisins to be nicely distributed through the loaf and some chopped up rosemary just before adding the water, and then mix it all together. That way worked much better than what I had tried before. That way you don't have to soak the raisins to make sure they are soft. I also stick two twigs of rosemary in the top just before baking but I'm not sure that is a great idea. They burn away and later you find a toothpick-like stick inside the bread!

Also possible to put the oven at 500 degrees for the first half hour and lower it to 450 when you take off the lid.