

Basic Bread



Here's what you'll need

Ingredients

- 5 cups all-purpose or bread flour
- 1 package active dry yeast (3 teaspoons)
- 2 cup warm water (warm not hot)
- 2 tbs sugar
- 2 tsp salt
- 1 tbs extra-virgin olive oil

Tools

- 1 large mixing bowl
- 1 small mixing bowl
- wooden spoon or spatula
- measuring spoons
- wet measure
- dry measure

Here's what you do

*First, you have to activate the yeast. You do this by dissolving a teaspoon of the sugar in a small bowl, adding about a cup of your warm water, and then adding the yeast. Let that hang out for a few minutes. You'll see the yeast start to kind of foam up a bit; that's called blooming.



Yeast is actually alive, you know. It's just asleep. Yeast is a microscopic fungus (ugh), but a good fungus, not the gross kind. The warm water wakes it up, and then of course, after a good nap, it's time to snack. Yeast loves sugar and salt, so when it gets added into the flour mix, it starts running around like crazy and eats the food, which then leads to gas... (ugh) the good kind... thus causing the rising or proofing.

If after 5 or 10 minutes your yeast doesn't look like the above it's most likely dead and you need new yeast

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While you're waiting for the yeast, put the dry stuff in a big mixing bowl, that's four and a half cups of your flour (set the rest aside we'll need it later), the rest of sugar and salt and mix it all up. After it's mixed, form a well in the center of the flour. Put your bloomed yeast and olive oil into the well.

Now the fun part: Get your hands in there! If you don't want to get your hands dirty no worries, use a wooden spoon or spatula. Mix all the stuff in the bowl together until it all sort of gums together. At first it should be more dry than wet, and sorta flaky and falling apart. A little at a time, add more water until it forms a sticky mass.



Okay, now remember that flour you set aside? Good. Sprinkle some of that on your work station. Now pull that sticky mass out of the bowl and onto the flour. Dust some more flour over the top. The dough should be sticky, but not wet and goopy. If it is too sticky that's no problem. First, just fold the dough with the flour, and if after a couple minutes it's still driving you nuts, just add a little more flour until it's manageable. Really sticky isn't bad. In fact it's better. It's just annoying to work with. Now start to fold and press the dough on to itself, left to right, up to down. This is called kneading. Keep doing this for about 5 to 10 minutes, and the dough should become relatively smooth and easier to work with as time goes on.



Now, put the dough back in the bowl, cover with a towel or something, and let it hang out in a warmish area... Okay, you done good kid. Now, we wait for a half hour to an hour or so, basically until the dough doubles in size. See you then.

Hey so what did you do while you were waiting? I made tomato sauce and then started drinking wine...and then sorta just kept drinking wine...

...anyway from here you can use this same dough to make all kinds of different bread from a regular old loaf for Sammy's or something like focaccia, dinner rolls, ciabatta or even pizza. Follow the direction below to make...



Focaccia:

Ingredient

- 1/2 cup canola oil
- 1 tbls coarse Black Pepper
- 1 tbls coarse salt

Tools

- 1 Baking sheet

This recipe should yield 1 good sized loaf. Put about half a cup of oil in a baking sheet or something like that. Put the dough ball on to the baking sheet. Get both sides of the dough in the oil, and then with the smoothest side down begin to flatten it. Now, spin and stretch it out to the shape of the pan the best you can.



Pinch back together any tears or holes. Flip so the smooth side is up.



With your finger, poke a bunch of dimples



(this helps to keep the oil on the top as well keeps the bread flat), and sprinkle a fair amount of coarse salt and coarse pepper. Move the tray to the oven top, pre-heat the oven to 450f/230c, and bake for 10 minutes. Check and rotate for even cooking, and bake for another 5 to 10. This will cook quickly so keep an eye on it.