

Home-made Bread

make your own bread the old way without a machine

We would normally use a bread-maker, but only to make the dough. Unfortunately, our machine gave up the ghost at Christmas; so we went back to the old way and made a batch by hand. Here's the result and, believe me, it tasted as good as the machine version. There are a few stages which give the impression that this method is time-consuming; but actually, very little is spent on work – most of it is simply waiting for the yeast to do its job all on its own.

For Gluten-Free bread, see Recipe 63.

560g strong plain flour
 (baker's flour with high protein – 11.5%)
 2 level tsps dried baker's yeast
 1 level Tbsp sugar
 1 level tsp salt
 1 egg
 30ml extra virgin olive oil
 310ml water (at blood-heat)



Warm a 23cm (9 inch) bowl with hot water, then drain. This helps avoid chilling the blood-heat water. Put this in the bowl and test with a knuckle – if it feels neither hot nor cold, the temperature is right. Add the sugar and stir to dissolve. Sprinkle on the yeast, cover with a cloth and set aside for 45 minutes to activate at room temperature in a draught-free place.

In a 30cm (12 inch) bowl, combine the salt with the flour. Cover this and set aside. Once the yeast has activated (it will appear frothy on the surface), lightly beat the egg with the oil, then gently stir into the yeast mix. Make a well in the centre of the flour, pour in the liquid and mix in with a wooden spoon until stringy; then finish working the dough by hand to take up all of the flour. Transfer to a floured, flat surface and knead for about 3 minutes to remove the air. Return the dough to the bowl, cover with cling wrap sprayed lightly with oil; and set aside to rise for 2 hours.

Tip: knead by pulling the outside of the dough into the centre and pressing down with fingers or knuckles, turning frequently to keep it even.

Once the dough has risen, punch the air out, transfer to the floured surface and knead again for 2 minutes. Divide into 2 and knead each to form long pieces a bit like baguettes. Pop these into 2 loaf tins lined with baking paper; cover with sprayed cling wrap and leave to rise until doubled in size (about 1 hour at room temperature). If you want some rolls too, use just over half of the dough for the loaf, cut the rest (don't forget they will grow with the rising!) and knead to the desired shapes. Bake on a tray lined with baking paper.

Bake on 175°C fan-forced (185-190°C conventional) for about 15-20 minutes or. until the tops brown slightly and bounce back when pressed. **N.B. Rolls will only take 10-12 minutes.**

Freezes well

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