



Focus on Food

HOME-BAKED BREAD: There's No Knead to Sweat It!

by Maria Noël Groves, Clinical Herbalist & Co-op Wellness Educator



Imagine delicious bakery-fresh bread for just 50 cents a loaf. Homemade bread makes it possible, but a lot of people struggle with baking bread. First, it's hard to find the time. Second, it never seems to taste as good as the stuff you buy at the bakery. Unless you have a great no-knead recipe, that is.

Mother Earth News magazine made the homesteading task of baking great bread accessible to all when it published a handful of recipes based on the technique. The wetter-than-average dough "kneads itself" and is adaptable to a variety of rising times, so it's easy and quick to put together and work into your schedule. Even better, the final loaf has a chewy texture akin to the best brick-oven bread money has to buy... for a fraction of the cost.

This basic recipe is my favorite of the bunch because it is so reliably simple and delicious. Don't feel pinned in by the specifics. I have experimented and cut a lot of corners, and the bread always comes out delicious. The only downside: Fresh bread is so easy to devour that you have to practice some self restraint not to eat a whole loaf each day!

Basic No-Knead Bread Recipe

This recipe makes enough dough for four small loaves, two regular loaves, or four or more pizzas.

- 3 cups warm water (around 100°F)
- 1 1/2 tablespoons salt, preferably sea or Kosher
- 1 1/2 tablespoons active dry yeast (or 1 1/2 packets)
- 6 1/2 cups flour
- Extras like cooked whole grains, herbs, seeds... (opt.)

In a large bowl, combine warm water, yeast, and salt. Slowly add in the flour (and extras) until mixed. You can use a mixer with a dough hook or mix it by hand with a whisk. Cover with a cloth and let rise for two or more hours until doubled in size. Remove a hunk of dough, pat with flour, and form it into a ball or other shape. Let rise about 30 minutes, slice the top of the dough with a knife, and bake it at about 420°F for 20 to 30 minutes, or until golden brown.

Variations:

My Basic New England Bread: Use 5 1/2 cups King Arthur all-purpose flour and 1 cup Brookford Farm stoneground whole wheat bread flour (which has amazing flavor and hearty texture).

Italian: Use all-purpose flour (or semolina). Before you put the dough in the oven, brush it with egg whites and sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Rosemary Bread: Use 5 1/2 cups all-purpose flour and 1 cup stoneground whole wheat flour. Add 1/8 to 1/4 cup whole rosemary with the flour. Fresh rosemary is best, but dried also works.

Baguette: Shape into long, thin loaves. If desired, use an egg wash and sprinkle with salt and/or sesame seeds. Thin baguettes (about two-inch diameter) have the chewiest, bakery-like texture of all – perfect with brie for parties.

Hearty Wheat Bread: Use 3 1/2 cups of all-purpose flour and 3 cups stoneground whole wheat flour (or a blend of whole wheat and oat flours). (I've yet to make a great 100 percent whole-grain bread.)

Pizza Dough: Roll or stretch dough (preferably cold) to shape and rub or spray the top with olive oil. Place on a hot stone and bake for three to five minutes. Remove from oven, add toppings, then bake until the cheese is bubbling and the crust is golden.

Tools & Tips:

- A baking or pizza stone works great, but it will probably smoke. Or you can grease and flour metal or loaf pans to prevent sticking or use parchment paper.
- A cast iron dutch oven makes a superb crust and chewy artisan-style bread. Let the dough rise in the dutch oven, then put it in the cold oven (with the lid on) as the oven comes to temp. Bake with the cover on for about 20 minutes, until lightly golden, then for an additional 10 minutes without the cover until slightly more golden. Be sure your lid can withstand the high baking temperatures.
- Cornmeal "dusted" on the bottom of the dough prevents sticking and gives a nice crunch and flavor.
- Let the first rising take place over a longer period of time – overnight or while you're at work – if that's easier for you. The extra hours won't hurt it.
- Once your dough has completed the first rising, you can opt to freeze dough balls for later use or put the whole bowl of dough (loosely lidded) in the fridge. Frozen dough makes chewier bread. Dough stored in the fridge will acquire a sour flavor over time.
- If you're in a rush, skip the second rising and just put the shaped, sliced dough in the cold oven as it comes to temp. It still comes out well!
- For a heartier crust, remove bread from the sheet halfway through cooking and finish baking directly on the oven racks.
- You can freeze extra loaves of bread to pull out as needed. Mimic the fresh bread flavor and warmth: Bake 'til they're almost done, put them in the freezer, thaw as needed, then bake it in a hot oven for 10 minutes. ■

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WHOLE GRAINS: Explore the Variety in our Bulk Department

by Maria Noël Groves, Clinical Herbalist & Co-op Wellness Educator

I admit my bread recipes are lacking in the whole-grain category, but you can easily make up for it by turning to the real deal for most meals and thinking of bread as a treat. The Co-op's bulk department offers a rainbow of grains in all shapes and sizes to explore. You can buy as little or as much as you need, so it's easy to experiment with a single batch to determine if you like it before it becomes a pantry staple.

Whole grains will go rancid over time, so stock up with only as much as you think you'll need for six months. If you prefer to buy grains in larger quantities, keep it in the freezer.

You can cook all these grains in plain or salted water on the stove or in a rice cooker. Enhance the flavor by using broth or adding seasonings. (The Better than Bullion broth bases in grocery taste great.) Refrigerate leftovers for up to a week or freeze them. Precooked whole grains are a healthy fast food to add to soups, use in a stir fry, heat up with milk and maple syrup for breakfast, and add to salads and other dishes.

Quinoa is the whole-grain darling for many because it cooks up in just 15 minutes and is rich in nutrients (including complete protein), gluten-free, versatile, and tasty. The texture is reminiscent of couscous and adapts well for hot and cold salads, soups, fillings for stuffed collard greens and vegetable patties, and as a basic side dish. Rinse it in a fine mesh strainer before cooking to remove the saponins that sometimes cause a bitter taste, or try toasting the grain in a pan before cooking for a richer flavor. Cook 1 cup of quinoa in 1 1/2 cups of water or broth. I season my cooking water with butter, salt, pepper, turmeric, and cayenne.

Rice is one of the most commonplace whole grains. Brown rice became the iconic (but perhaps a bit boring) staple of macrobiotic and other healthy diets, but I urge you to try other whole grain rice varieties. My favorite is Lundberg Family Farm's Wild Blend, a combination of brown, Wehani, black, and wild rice. The complex, chewy texture

will knock your socks off. It's delicious tossed with almost any combination of protein and vegetables to make a pilaf-like meal or soup. Also try "forbidden" black rice, a small grain, vividly hued rice loaded with antioxidants akin to those in blueberries and blackberries. And, of course, there are several varieties of plain old brown rice as well. (True wild rice is not actually rice at all, but it blends well in rice pilaf and with lentils.) Cook 1 cup of whole grain rice with approximately 2 cups of water or broth for 30 to 45 minutes, or until tender. Broth significantly enhances the flavor. No matter what the color, small grain rice tends to stick together better whereas long grains are usually chewier.

Bulgur is cracked wheat that is parboiled, then dried, so it cooks up quickly. It's a staple in Middle Eastern cuisine including tabbouleh and a variety of lamb dishes. Our Outreach Coordinator Shane Smith raves about his wife's egg foo young recipe which features bulgur blended with eggs,

scallions, and mung beans, cooked into pancakes and served with hoisin sauce. He also loves to saute extra bulgur with beets and onions in olive oil. Simply simmer 1 cup of bulgur in 2 cups of water for 10 to 15 minutes.

Farro & Pearled Barley are somewhat interchangeable in recipes. Both of these small grains have a plump, chewy texture that is perfect for risotto, stew, casseroles, and cold salads. Our Wellness Coordinator Audrey enjoys

barley's meaty flavor in beef soups or as a ground meat stand-in for chili. Cook 1 cup of barley or farro in approximately 2 1/2 cups of water for 20 to 30 minutes.

Wheat & Spelt Berries are like chewier, wheat-ier long-grain rice. They take much

longer to cook than most grains; however, their flavor is superb, and they hold up well in soups without getting soggy. Soak 1 cup of grains overnight, strain, then cook in 4 cups of water for 45 to 60 minutes. ■

