

Basic Yeast Bread Recipe

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon active dry yeast
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon salt
2 cups warm water – 110 degrees F
5 ½ to 6 cups all-purpose flour
Cornmeal or flour for dusting

Instructions:

In a large bowl mix together the yeast, sugar salt and water. Let this stand until the yeast is dissolved – 5 to 10 minutes. Gradually add the flour, one cup at a time to the liquid and mix thoroughly until the dough pulls away from the sides of the bowl. Turn the dough out onto a floured surface to knead.

Knead the bread – basically give it a good massage – using the heels of your hands and your finger tips to push dough away from you. Fold back over on itself from time to time so it doesn't get too thin. Do this for 5 minutes sprinkling with only enough flour on your kneading surface and hands to prevent sticking.

Scrape out and grease the mixing bowl with a few drops of olive oil or non-stick baking spray. Knead dough again for 2-3 minutes. Place dough in greased bowl and loosely cover with plastic wrap or a kitchen towel. Place in a warm area. If your kitchen is cold, turn on the oven to the lowest temperature and put your dough directly to the side of the oven. Allow your dough to double, about 1 to 2 hours.

When your dough has risen, punch down the dough with your fist and briefly knead out any air bubbles. Cut the dough in half and shape into the shape you desire or put into a lightly greased bread pan. If you want to just shape the bread, place on a baking sheet generously sprinkled with cornmeal. Let loaves rest for five minutes.

To bake: lightly slash the tops of the loaves three or four times diagonally (like you see in the picture on the first page of this handout) and then brush them with cold water. Place a pan such as a roasting pan or Pyrex dish in the bottom of the oven filled with 1" of boiling water. Put bread loaves into a cold oven. Close oven door and turn on heat to 400 degrees F for 35-45 minutes, until the loaves are golden brown and sounds hollow when tapped.