



THOUSAND
bites of bread

Communal Table Bread

Makes 2 loaves

I developed this recipe with a friend who runs a homeless shelter. He wanted good quality bread to provide at a dinner he hosts for the community every Wednesday. We brainstormed and came up with this easy, no-knead type recipe that could be taught to kids at a nearby school. They would learn to make the bread and take a loaf home; a second loaf would stay at the shelter to provide good food for the people who come for assistance.

We live in an imperfect world. At any rate, perfection is not what we're after. What we want is to live in a harmonious community, and that's what this bread wants, too. So let's work together to make something imperfect that finds a way to be both nourishing and tasty, despite differences...no, BECAUSE of differences. Try this bread with what's on hand and let me know what you think.

I provide volume measurements for this recipe, but I highly recommend trying to find a scale and measuring by weight for better results. I've tested this with many kinds of flours, and while there were slight differences, all were happily eaten by friends and family.

For the preferment:

10 to 15 grams of sourdough starter (or 1/8 teaspoon of instant yeast)

30 grams of water (3 tablespoons)

30 grams of flour (1/4 cup)

*Please note that this is simultaneously a feeding for your sourdough, and a preferment for your dough. For that reason, make sure you save a bit before mixing the dough below so you can feed it again next time.

For the final mix:

750 to 850 grams water (3 1/2 cups)

50 grams preferment (*above) or sourdough starter (1/4 cup)

20 grams (optional) honey or sugar (1 tablespoon)

20 grams oil or melted butter (1 1/2 tablespoons)

1000 grams whole wheat flour or a mix of sifted or all-purpose (9 cups)

20 grams salt (1 tablespoon)

The day before you want to bake, pull out your starter and feed it water and flour to make a preferment. This will be your leavening. You don't need much for this recipe, but it's good to feed it fresh, the night before you mix the dough. Make the preferment by feeding your starter some fresh water and flour and leaving it at room temperature, covered, all day until you see bubbles. If you don't have sourdough starter, use a pinch of instant yeast, although I highly recommend finding starter and doing it that way. The flavors will be more nuanced and there is some evidence that sourdough makes for a more digestible loaf.

After your preferment has been sitting at room temperature for about 12 hours, it should be pretty bubbly and smell nice. At that time, you'll take 50 grams of this mixture for your final dough, and

put the remainder back in the fridge for next time. If you're using instant yeast, use the whole amount and start over next time (or find some sourdough starter!)

When you're ready to mix your dough, put the 50 grams of active starter from above in a bowl of water. You'll have to decide on the amount of water, and here's how you do that: In general, the more whole grain, the more liquid you need. In other words, if you're making white bread, you can use 750 grams of water; if you're making 100% whole wheat, use 850 grams.

Mix the water, preferment, honey, and oil in a large mixing bowl. This doesn't have to be fully incorporated, but simply mixed together a bit. Add the flour and salt and mix until there are no visible dry pockets. Cover with a wet towel or a plate and let this mixture rest at room temperature for 8 to 12 hours. I often do this overnight to shape in the morning OR I'll mix first thing in the morning to shape when I get home from work in the evening.

After its long rest, fold the dough by grabbing the edges of one side and folding it towards the middle. Do this all the way around the bowl until all the edges are folded and tucked back in. This usually takes about 4 to 8 folds around the bowl, depending on the flour. This folding motion degases the dough a little and provides a bit of structure for the shaping you're about to do. Let it rest after you fold for 10 to 30 minutes. If you don't have time, simply go straight into shaping.

To shape, you need to make some choices. This recipe makes 2 loaves or 16 flatbreads that can be used for pita or pizza or grilled flatbread.

To make the loaves cut the dough in half. If you'd like to make one now and one later, put the ones you aren't going to make into a container in the fridge and hold there for up to three days. It will get more sour over time, but still be perfectly tasty as the days go on.

For making the loaves now, preshape them by patting out the dough into a rectangle. With the long side of the rectangle vertical to you, fold the top towards the middle, then the bottom up with a little overlap, kind of like tri-folding a letter. Next fold the left side in and then the right side, also with overlap. This process will make a seam, which is the bottom of your loaf. Flip it over to rest 5 to 10 minutes with this seam down. Get your loaf pans ready while it's resting: butter or grease the sides of two standard size loaf pans. For the final shape, turn the seam side up again with the seam running horizontal. Refold the left side towards the middle, then the right side with overlap, again like tri-folding a letter. This time, instead of folding the top and bottom sides in the same manner, roll the dough from top to bottom into a kind of jellyroll shape and place the seam side down in the prepared loaf pan. Cover these pans with another loaf pan or a tent of foil. Proof at room temperature until the loaves gain enough volume to fill the pan; the tops usually reach just over the lip when I put them in the oven. About an hour into the proof, heat the oven to 450°F. When the loaves are finished proofing, bake them for 40 minutes total, keeping them covered for the first part of the bake and uncovering them for the last 20 minutes. Pop them out of the pan and let cool at room temperature.

To make flatbread, pita, or pizza dough, cut the dough in half (you can make one half into a loaf and the other into pita and pizza if you desire). Cut each half into eight pieces of relatively equal size. Shape each piece into a ball. Cover and let rest for 30 minutes to 1 hour. If you want to save some of these for later, put them on a baking sheet and store in the fridge for up to 3 days. For longer storage, put them on a sheet pan in the freezer and flash-freeze until solid, then transfer to a bag for easier storage. When you're ready to make them, bring to room temperature.

For pita, preheat the oven to 500°F. If you have a baking stone, put it in the oven, or you can also use a baking sheet. Pat out each ball into a round. You can use your fingertips and palms to flatten this out, loosening the bottom of the dough now and then from sticking to the table. Use flour liberally and flip the round from time to time to keep it from sticking. When the dough is well flattened, shake off the excess flour and put the rounds into the preheated oven. Let cook about 5 minutes until they puff up and then flip for another minute or so. Eat hot out of the oven, or soon after. They'll save in a zip-top bag for up to three days. As they stale, make them into chips!

For pizza, I find it best to roll this out with a rolling pin until pretty thin. Transfer to a pizza pan or baking stone and proceed with the toppings of your choice.

Savor the versatility of our lives with delight and gratitude!

Communal Table Bread Timing Worksheet

Weekend Schedule

Friday morning → **Feed the sourdough starter and let rest on the counter all day**

Friday night → **Mix the dough**

Saturday first thing in the morning → **Fold dough, then shape loaves and/or pizza and let rise**

Saturday later in the morning → **Bake bread** Please don't be in a hurry. Bread is really better if you let it cool a bit after baking. Enjoy!

Weeknight Schedule

At night before bed → **Feed the sourdough starter and let rest on the counter overnight**

First thing in the morning before work → **Mix the dough**

When you get home from work → **Fold dough, then shape loaves and/or pizza and let rise**

Before dinner → **Bake bread** Please don't be in a hurry. Bread is really better if you let it cool a bit after baking. Enjoy!

*Always remember to feed your starter once a week to keep it healthy. If you don't bake that week, use the leftover starter to make cookies! Or gather it over time and use it for pancakes.