

# WHITE BREAD

Makes 2 loaves

By Dennis W. Viau; adapted from other recipes

I think a lot of cooks shy away from making bread because they can't participate in the entire process. When you make a stir-fry you chop stuff and cook it in a wok, controlling every step. With bread, you are forced to rely on nature. You assemble the dough and set it aside to rise without any help from you. Will nature succeed or fail? She has been succeeding for thousands of years. Trust her. I know whole wheat bread is healthier, but I like white bread.



## Ingredients:

1 tablespoon active dry or instant yeast  
1 tablespoon sugar  
1 cup (237ml) water, 105°F (41°C) to 115°F (46°C)  
1½ cups (12 ounces/355ml) water (or lager beer\*—optional)  
About 6⅓ cups (2 pounds/900g) bread flour (weighing is more accurate)  
2 tablespoons vital wheat gluten (optional)  
2 teaspoons salt  
¼ cup (50g) butter, room temperature

## Directions:

Place the yeast and sugar in a large bowl and add the 1 cup of warm water. Let rest a few minutes, until the yeast develops a foam on the surface (indicating the yeast is good). Add the remaining water (or the beer), then add half the flour and blend until smooth.

Add the remaining flour, a little at a time, with the optional vital wheat gluten the salt and combine. Transfer the dough to a clean surface and knead for 6 to 8 minutes (or knead 10 minutes in a stand mixer). The mixture should be a little sticky. Use a knife to cut a deep slit in the dough. Press about 1 tablespoon of butter into the slit and seal the dough over it. Knead to blend the butter into the dough. The dough will separate because of the butter, but continue kneading and it will eventually come together again. Repeat until all the butter is incorporated.

Place the dough in a large buttered bowl. Coat the top surface with a little butter. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap or a damp kitchen towel and let rise in a warm place until doubled in bulk, 45 minutes to one hour (longer if your kitchen is cold).

Grease two standard 9-inch by 5-inch (23x13cm) loaf pans with butter (or line with parchment). Divide the dough in half and shape two loaves; place each in the loaf pans. Pat the tops with butter. Cover and let rise about 45 minutes to one hour.

Heat the oven to 375°F (190°C) with a rack in the center of the oven. Bake the bread 35 to 45 minutes until golden brown. Remove from the pans and cool thoroughly on a rack.

The **Step By Step** guide begins on the following page.

\*Beer might seem odd, but I think it gives the bread a *breadier* flavor.

## STEP-BY-STEP

**1**

Combine yeast, sugar, and 1 cup of water in a large mixing bowl. Let rest a few minutes. Add the remaining water (or beer). Then add half the flour and mix into a batter. Blend until smooth.

**2**

Add the remaining flour, a little at a time, with the salt (and optional vital wheat gluten) Mix, either by hand or machine, until the dough comes together.

**3**

Knead for about 6 to 8 minutes (or 10 minutes by machine). The dough will be sticky, but as you knead, it will become less sticky.

**4**

If you're not familiar with kneading, you press into the dough with the heel of one hand and then use the other hand to roll and fold it into itself. Work back and forth with both hands and soon the dough will be smooth and elastic. At this point it barely sticks to the hands.

I use a stand mixer, and for the right texture I look to see that the dough is sticking in the bottom of the bowl but pulling away from the sides of the bowl as the machine kneads it.

5



Cut a slit into the dough (you can do this with the dough in the machine's mixing bowl) and push a small scoop of butter (1 or 2 tablespoons) into the slit. Close the dough over it and knead until the butter is fully incorporated. The dough will separate because of the butter, but keep kneading. It will come together.

6



Place the dough in a large buttered bowl (I use the bowl of my stand mixer, after I clean it). Coat the top with a little butter. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and set in a warm place to rise for 45 minutes to an hour. (I put mine on top of the refrigerator or on top of one of my computers, if it is on.)



**7**

Let the dough rise until doubled in bulk (it could take longer or shorter, depending on the temperature of your kitchen).

**8**

Transfer the dough to a clean surface and divide in half. Shape each half into a loaf.

9



Place the loaves in greased (or lined) bread pans and pat the top with butter. Cover with plastic wrap and set them in a warm place to rise until doubled in bulk, about 45 minutes to an hour.

10



These are ready to go into the oven. Place a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Bake the bread for 35 to 45 minutes, until golden brown.

You can slit the top with a sharp knife, cutting a shallow groove along the length. This will allow the dough to expand a little more when it goes into the oven.



Allow the bread to cool thoroughly before cutting.

## CONCLUSION

Although refrigerating bread is not recommended (it will make it go stale more quickly), I refrigerate my bread because I only use it for toast.

As a final point, consider the economy of making your own bread. The 25-pound bag of bread flour in the warehouse store costs less than \$6. If I use  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cups water rather than beer and water, a loaf of bread would cost me about 25¢. Where can you buy bread for 25¢ per loaf? And my own bread has all the extra qualities of being homemade. No preservatives. Real butter. And a satisfying flavor.