Small Plain Table Loaf

1 small round loaf, cut into 8 slices; 4 bread portions of 2 slices each · Active 25 min · Total 260 min

Ingredients

• About 2 cups plus 1 tablespoon white bread flour (250 g), weighed, plus up to 2 teaspoons (5 g) for the surface

• 2/3 cup plus 1 teaspoon drinking water (165 ml), lukewarm at about 95–100°F/35–38°C

• About 3/4 teaspoon instant yeast (2.5 g), weighed if possible; use instant yeast rather than active dry yeast for this direct-mix method

• 3/4 teaspoon plus a small pinch fine salt (5 g)

Set out

Conventional oven, Mixing bowl with cover, Kitchen scale, measuring jug and spoons, Clean kneading surface and dough scraper, Flat metal baking sheet with at least 10 by 12 inches/25 by 30 cm usable area, Baking paper rated for at least 425°F/220°C, Small sharp knife for scoring, Food thermometer, Oven gloves and wire cooling rack, Serrated bread knife, Foil for loosely covering a browning crust if needed

Allergens

Wheat. Check the flour and yeast labels for added ingredients and cross-contact warnings. The base formula has no added milk or egg; that is not a claim that the finished loaf is allergen-free.

Make it

1. Mix the 250 g dough flour, instant yeast and salt in the bowl. Add all the measured lukewarm water and stir until no dry pockets remain. Knead for 8–10 minutes until smooth and elastic, using only as much of the measured 5 g bench flour as needed to prevent sticking. Keep the dough soft rather than adding unlisted flour. Do not taste raw dough; wash hands and flour-dusted tools before touching ready-to-eat food.

2. Return the dough to the bowl, cover and leave in a comfortably warm room for about 75–105 minutes, until roughly doubled. A cool room may take longer. Judge the expansion rather than making an exact clock promise.

3. Line the cold baking sheet with suitable paper. Gently flatten the risen dough, bring the edges toward the center and pinch them together. Turn seam-side down and cup with your hands to make a taut round about 5 1/2 inches/14 cm across. Put on the sheet, cover loosely and prove for 35–50 minutes, until puffy and a gentle fingertip indentation returns slowly. The loaf must have room to widen as it rises.

4. During the final 20 minutes of proving, heat the oven to 425°F/220°C, conventional, with a middle shelf clear. Uncover the dough and cut one shallow slash about 1/4 inch/6 mm deep across the top. Bake for 10 minutes, reduce to 400°F/200°C and bake for another 20–25 minutes, until deeply golden with a firm base and a central temperature around 205–210°F/96–99°C. If it is coloring too quickly, cover the top loosely with foil and continue until the center is baked.

5. Transfer to the rack and cool for at least 45 minutes before slicing. Cut into 8 slices and serve 2 as a bread portion with a separately prepared meal. The loaf is plain: no butter, wine, cheese or garnish is included in this recipe.

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A useful detail

The dough weighs about 422 g before any small amount of bench flour is incorporated. Its water is 66% of the dough flour weight. The 260-minute estimate allows mixing, up to 105 minutes for the first rise, shaping, up to 50 minutes for the second rise, 35 minutes baking and 45 minutes cooling. Proving can take longer in a cool room.

Keep it well

Cool completely before wrapping. For best texture, keep the plain loaf covered in a cool, dry place and use within 2 days. Freeze individual slices once cool, well wrapped at 0°F/−18°C, for up to 2 months for quality. Thaw slices at room temperature or toast from frozen. These directions apply to this plain bread, not to a sandwich with perishable fillings.

Modern recipe and historical connection

Bread is the documented food category. White bread flour, instant yeast, hydration, salt, shape, yield and oven schedule are all original modern choices. No wine is required to make or serve the loaf.

Another way

For a different modern shape, form the same dough into one short oval rather than a round. Keep it on the same roomy sheet, preserve both rises and use the full cooked-center check; no extra filling or topping is added.