

Real Bread in 10 Minutes

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The Basic Recipe:

Throw into a bowl...

- 3 cups of flour
 - 2 tsp salt
 - 2 tsp yeast
 - 1.2-1.7 cups of very warm water
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- Mix just until everything is wet, 60 seconds
 - Cover bowl and put in a warm oven for 50 minutes **or** cover and put in the fridge
 - "Cloak" the dough into today's shape. Use flour or oil as lubricant
 - Set your dough on a cookie sheet and decorate it
 - Put the dough in the oven
 - Set the oven to 425 degrees for 50 minutes
 - Take out **your** bread!

Send me photos of your
bread and any
questions!

Throw into a bowl - Steel or ceramic is best if it's going in the oven to proof. Don't use aluminum for anything, the acid in the yeast will eat at it and taste funny. If this is bound for the fridge, use a bowl or Tupperware that fits the fridge and has a lid that seals loosely.

3 cups of flour - Don't sift it, tap it, or level it, just measure approximately. You'll get the exact proportions correct as you mix it in a minute. The type of flour matters far less than you think. Try All Purpose or Bread flour. Use at least 50% All Purpose flour and a mix of whatever else you want: rye, whole wheat, spelt, etc...

2 tsp salt - Maybe a "scant" 2 tsp. Spread it out as you dump it in but don't worry about perfectly spreading it. Getting the proportion of salt to flour is important! Don't use fancy salt in the bread, though fancy salt ON the bread later could be nice.

2 tsp yeast - Maybe a "scant" 2 tsp, or a little more won't hurt, it's fine to be sloppy measuring. Put a container of yeast on your freezer door for quick access, and the rest in the back of your freezer; it keeps for years. Every dry yeast I've tried so far has worked great, but don't freeze fresh yeast, sadness results. YMMV. Buy \$3/lb yeast from Smart & Final or Costco, NOT \$1/packet yeast!!

1.2-1.7 cups of very warm water - 105 degrees is perfect, 120 hurts your hand and kills the yeast :-(. Using water that is too cool makes the yeast grow slower and your bread will take longer to proof. You want the final dough to be icky-stickier than you think it should be. No, it won't be smooth. This wetness helps the yeast grow fast. The humidity and temperature in your kitchen and the type of flour will change how much water you need; aim for a pretty icky-sticky dough. The right consistency is important. You'll get a feel for it.

Mix just until everything is wet, 60 seconds - use only one hand to minimize the yucky mess. 60 seconds of mixing is enough! Don't knead the dough! While you are mixing, maybe add a little water or flour to get the moisture content just right. When finishing up, mush all the dough into one neat-ish pile, else the dangly bits might dry out. When done, use a bowl scraper or spatula to scrape the dough off your hand.

Cover bowl and put in a warm oven for 50 minutes - Cover the bowl with a cookie sheet to keep it from drying out. Turn on your oven for a minute and turn it off to warm it up to 130 degrees or so. It should hold the heat long enough for proofing. Turn on the oven light for warmth. The warmth will turbo-charge the yeast!

or cover and put in the fridge - If you aren't baking the bread now, throw it into the fridge. It will keep for 4-14 days depending on mysterious factors. As long as it doesn't smell alcohol-ish or have dry crusty bits, the dough is still good! And hey, what if you made a double batch and left it in the fridge? or 12 cups? You can cut off a hunk of dough and bake some every day! Oh yes you can!

"Cloak" the dough into today's shape. Use flour or oil as lubricant - Grab it out of the oven or the fridge and form it into today's shape. You'll need some kind of lubricant on your hands and the pan or the dough will stick madly, making a giant mess (refrigerated dough isn't quite as sticky, which is nice). Handle the dough very little, just enough to make it pretty. Tuck the ugly bits to the bottom of the loaf, though make sure to smooch the ugly bits on the bottom together lest the inside of the finished loaf be segmented. And you know what? Simply plopping the dough out of the bowl and onto your baking surface works too! It'll come out all awesomely rustic looking. Seriously!

Set your dough on a cookie sheet and decorate it – Make sure it's got flour or oil on the bottom so it doesn't stick to the pan. Slashing the bread with a knife makes it pretty. A pat down with a wet hand and then a sprinkle of sesame seeds is nice. A sprinkle of kosher salt, or most any spice from your (chronically underutilized!) spice rack is nice. Or dare to do nothing at all!

Put the dough in the oven – Notice we put the dough in a cold oven! The time it takes your oven to get from cold to full temperature gives the yeast just a little more time to rise. And it's one less time you need to enter the kitchen.

Set the oven to 425° for 50 minutes – 425° is excellent if you want a browned, slightly tough crust. 525° browns/blackens the crust, which can be nice too. 350° makes for a soft crust (maybe leave it in 5 more minutes). Thin baguettes or flatbread, a little less time, 45 minutes? Giant loaves, a little longer, 55 minutes? Maybe try a 5 minute 550° blast to blacken the crust. You'll get a feel for how it comes out of your oven.

Take out your bread! - Yum! If you cut into your loaf and find it's still gummy inside, put it back in the oven for a while. Yes, you can put the bread back in the oven after it has cooled!

Some things to try:

- Put your dough in the oven in a covered pot or between 2 preheated cast iron pans. This will let the bread steam itself and develop a hearty, rustic crust.
- Let the dough rise a little longer and it'll make an airier, larger bubbled loaf.
- Try making slightly dryer or wetter dough. It'll sit different on the pan and rise different.
- Use amendments! Pre-mixed spices from Penzeys.com, SF Herb Co., food lying around the house!
- Make a double (or quadruple!) recipe and put the unused dough straight in the fridge til you need it. It can go straight from fridge to oven.
- A great book on the subject is "Artisan Bread in 5 Minutes a Day"
- Experiment! Play! If you are using the right proportions of the basic ingredients, it's really hard to make a bad loaf, and the ingredients are inexpensive even if you do!

Thank you! I would love to hear how your loaf came out! Send pictures!

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