

Plain Bread

Take out a big bowl. Dissolve two teaspoons of salt and one teaspoon of sugar in 4 cups of warm water. The water should feel warm when you put your finger in, but not uncomfortably so.

Sprinkle 1/2 teaspoon of active dry yeast over the water. It will sink to the bottom, then start floating up to the top once it wakes up and starts to metabolise. If it doesn't do that, your water was the wrong temperature and you should start over.

Stir up your yeast and water, and then stir in enough stone-ground whole wheat flour to make a thick porridge. Cover up the bowl with a large lid. Leave the dough to ferment overnight. If you have a proofing oven, you can instead proof the dough for 5 to 8 hours at 40C.

After the dough has fermented, add one cup more water. Then stir in enough whole wheat flour to make a firm but still fairly wet dough. The dough will be elastic because the bubbles from the overnight rising aligned the gluten. You do not have to knead the dough. You just have to make sure that the flour is completely worked in.

Grease three medium-sized loaf pans. Palm oil works well. Divide the dough into the three pans. Clean up your hands, and when they are still completely wet, press the dough down into the pans so that it comes up about half way up the sides of the pan. Cover the pans with a smooth cotton or linen towel (or a pillowcase, in a pinch). Do not use a terry-cloth towel, or it will be a mess to clean up.

The dough will rise in several hours at ordinary room temperature, or faster in a proofing oven. Once it has risen just above the top of the pans, bake at 195C for an hour. When it is done, it will have shrunk away from the sides of the pan. When you turn it out of the pans, it will sound hollow when tapped on the bottom. Use your smooth towel to cover the bread so that it does not dry out while it is cooling.

Your bread will keep best in a fabric bag so that it can breathe and not go moldy,. You can also freeze the bread. It is better not to keep it in plastic bags or put it in the refrigerator.