



RECIPE: FIRST SIMPLE LOAF

Makes: 2 Loaves

Note: You'll need 2 x 2lb loaf tins (Base: 10x16.5cm, Top: 13x20cm, Height: 9cm)

Ingredients

640g Water (at room temperature)

24g Fresh Yeast or 14g Dried Fast Action Yeast (2 x 7g sachets)

1kg Strong White Bread Flour, plus extra for dusting

16g Salt

30g Olive Oil, plus extra for greasing

Method

Making the Dough

1. In a large mixing bowl weigh the water then stir in the yeast to dissolve.
2. Reset the scales to 0 and weigh the flour, salt and oil directly into the bowl. Mix everything together with your dough scraper.
3. Tip the dough out onto a clean surface and knead well for 8 minutes - don't add any extra flour at this point, just keep scraping up the dough every once in a while if it's sticking (see Tip below).
4. Shape the dough into a rough ball and place it back in your mixing bowl. Dust the top with a little flour, cover with a clean cloth and leave to rest at room temperature for 1 hour.

Dividing and Pre-shaping

1. Lightly dust the top of your dough and use your dough scraper to ease it out of the bowl onto a clean surface so that it lands upside down, with the sticky side facing up.
2. Use your fingertips to lightly flatten the dough. Cut into 2 equal pieces with the flat edge of your scraper (you can weigh the dough for accuracy if you like). You should end up with 2 semi-circle shapes.
3. Form each piece into a ball. Starting at the top of the dough (12 o'clock position), pinch the edge between your fingers and thumbs and stretch outwards (away from you) then fold it back over the dough towards the bottom (6 o'clock position) and press down. Rotate the dough slightly and continue to repeat the turns and folds, working around the dough to form a nice bouncy ball. All the seams and folds should end up on one side, with the underside smooth and tight.
4. Turn the dough back over, smooth side up, cupping your hands underneath to neaten the balls. Dust both lightly with flour, cover with a clean cloth and leave to rest for 15 minutes.

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Shaping

1. Lightly grease your loaf tins with oil (or butter).
2. The balls of dough should have relaxed and spread slightly. Lightly flour the work surface again and carefully flip each ball over with your dough scraper, so they are both now upside down.
3. To shape each loaf, press quite firmly all over with your fingertips or knuckles to create a flat circle. Stretch out the left-hand side slightly then fold over the dough at an angle. Repeat with the other side to create a capital A shape (narrower at the top, wider at the bottom).
4. Fold over the top edge and press down gently, then continue rolling downwards towards the bottom, pressing gently after each roll, to create a tight Swiss roll shape. Pinch the seam to stick in place.
5. Place in your loaf tin with the seam side down. Repeat with the second ball.

Final Proof

1. Cover the tins with a cloth and rest for 1 hour.
2. Preheat your oven to 220°C/Fan 200°C/Gas Mark 7 and place a deep roasting tin in the bottom.

Baking

1. Just before baking, boil the kettle.
2. Put the tins in the oven, pour a few centimetres of hot water from the kettle into the tin at the bottom and quickly close the door to trap steam.
3. Bake for 40 minutes although have a check at 30 minutes as oven temperatures can really vary. If it looks like they are getting too dark on top, turn the oven down to 200°C/Fan 180°C/Gas Mark 6 for the final 10 minutes.
4. When nicely golden and crusty on top, pop the loaves out of the tins and check the bottoms - if it seems a bit soft, put the loaves (without the tin) back in the oven for a further 5-10 minutes to crisp up. Transfer to a wire rack to cool.

Tips from me...

Helpful videos you might like to see:

- [Bread Tip #130: Simple Loaf Tutorial, Start to Finish \(Yeasted Bread\)](#)
- [Bread Tip #57: What is a 2lb Loaf Tin?](#)
- [Bread Tip #122: How to Shape a Loaf for a Tin](#)
- [Bread Tip #131: Kneading Bread Dough in Real Time](#)

This recipe is aimed at all you beginner bakers out there, but it's also just a great, basic loaf for any time. There are no shortcuts or cheats, just proper baking methods but hopefully explained in a way that you'll easily be able to follow and grow your confidence in baking bread.

This is a large quantity of dough but I always think it's a good idea to bake 2 loaves at a time - it takes the same amount of time and you get extra practice with shaping techniques. The bread freezes brilliantly so you can always stash away one loaf for later. If you prefer though, simply halve the recipe and make one loaf at a time.

I find weighing out liquids in grams WAY more accurate than measuring in volume. To do it, just place an empty jug onto your scales, make sure it is set to zero, and pour in the amount you need.

Dough scrapers are my go-to most useful piece of bread making kit. I use them for mixing the dough, cutting it, scraping out bowls, cleaning the table, LITERALLY everything. If you don't have one yet you can get yours at bakewithjack.co.uk/shop