

No-Knead Artisan Bread

Adapted from the New York Times No-Knead Bread Recipe

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/08/dining/08mini.html>

Time: About 45 minutes plus 10-20 hours rising

The beauty of this recipe is that it is both adaptable & tolerant. I've always thought baking bread was too fussy for me and required exact measuring, timing & temperatures. Almost everything in this recipe can be tweaked, though -- generally, a little more water, salt, flour or yeast won't hurt anything, nor will less time rising or more time baking. It's virtually foolproof! The creator describes it as "a truly minimalist breadmaking technique that allows people to make excellent bread at home with very little effort. The method is surprisingly simple -- I think a 4-year-old could master it -- and the results are fantastic."

But the true secret of this fantastic bread is finding the right container to bake it in. I resisted this glorious recipe for over a year because I didn't have a dutch oven. But you mostly just need a lidded container that can withstand the heat of a 450-degree oven for about an hour. If you think you have one, check the handles and the lid knob: strangely, many of them are only rated to 350 degrees! When I finally figured out I could make this in a plain Pyrex lidded bowl, I tried my first batch and never looked back.

(Also, I make half batches, but I'm including the full recipe here.)

3 cups all-purpose or bread flour
a little over 1.5 cups of water
1/4 teaspoon instant yeast (yes, this is a very tiny amount!)
1 1/4 teaspoons salt
More flour as needed

1. In a large bowl combine flour, yeast and salt. Add 1 5/8 cups water, and stir until blended; dough will be very shaggy and sticky.

Cover bowl with plastic wrap or a lid. Let dough rest 12-18 hours at room temperature. I usually start a batch before I go to bed. I've adapted this to "the amount of time I have" or "when I can't stand it anymore" with good results (as little as 7 hours for the bread at Create the World), but generally, the longer you can let it set, the more texture you'll get in the bread. Dough is ready when its surface is dotted with bubbles.

2. Flour a work surface and scrape dough onto it; sprinkle it with a little more flour and fold it over on itself once or twice, then gently & quickly shape dough into a ball. Use enough flour to keep dough from sticking to work surface or to your fingers. Generously coat a cutting board or a cotton towel/napkin (not terrycloth) with flour; put dough seam side down on surface and dust with more flour.

Cover with a another cotton towel and let it rise again for about 2 hours. (This is also an adaptable time.)

3. At least 30 minutes before dough is ready, heat oven to 450 degrees. Put a 6- to 8-quart heavy covered pot (cast iron, enamel, Pyrex or ceramic) in oven as it

heats. When dough is ready, carefully remove pot from oven. Slide your hand under the cutting board or towel and turn the dough over into pot, seam side up. If you didn't use enough flour to keep it from sticking to the surface, it will probably look like a mess, but that's okay! It makes the loaf look "rustic" and it will taste just as good. You could slash the top at this point if you wanted, but it's not necessary. Shake pan once or twice if dough is unevenly distributed; it will straighten out as it bakes. Cover with lid and bake 30 minutes, then remove lid and bake another 15-30 minutes, until loaf is beautifully browned. Cool on a rack for at least an hour (this is the hardest part of the whole process!).

Next time, you could replace up to 1/3 of the flour with another grain, or oats; you could add cranberries, olives or garlic; you could sprinkle sesame seeds on top. You can also look up other no-knead recipes online for more ideas. Good luck!