

# The S&S Homestead Foodbook

## Chapter Seven

### Bread



## Bread

If you chop your own wood, it will warm you twice; if you bake your own bread, it will sustain you twice. There is an aesthetic and spiritual pleasure in baking, and a sensual pleasure in eating, the delicious, firm-textured, healthy loaves that come out of your oven. Baking bread does take time (mostly in having to be home during the rising and baking), but the time it takes is relative: the recipes below will give you multiple loaves, which can be frozen: depending on your family's bread consumption, one baking can provide bread for weeks. You can bake two loaves of French bread in less time than you could go to the store to buy them.

Moreover, the process itself is satisfying. Baking your own bread is a part of self-sufficiency. Working with the dough is, for some people, a good way to release tension; for others, it's a meditation. The house will smell wonderful. And you'll send your family off with sandwiches that stand up to mayonnaise.

Baking bread is not mysterious or difficult, but does become easier with experience. Henning taught me how to bake rye bread. He drove me crazy by saying, "Add flour," and when I'd say, "How much?" answering "Just enough." Although I watched him and wrote down the exact amounts of the ingredients he used, I soon learned to use my senses instead of measurements: the bread, after kneading, should feel firm, alive, and respond readily to a poke with the finger.

I use organic flour for everything. It is not particularly expensive, it's better for you than non-organic flour, and it has a finer texture than non-organic flour. Crepe mixtures, gravies, and pancake batter made with organic flour don't have those irritating little lumps in them.

If you take bread out of the pans before it's thoroughly baked, you can place the loaves directly on the oven racks, with the heat off, to finish baking. Don't put the loaves back in the pans – the bread will "sweat".

### *French Bread*

(I thank Debbie Tetu for this recipe and the recipes for Foccacia)

2 C warm water (100-115 degrees)  
1 T sugar  
2 T yeast  
4 C white organic flour, plus some for the kneading  
1 heaping tsp salt  
Olive oil

(Note: you can use half or all whole wheat flour for this recipe. It will be healthier, but it won't be traditional in taste or texture.)

In one bowl, pour water over sugar. Add yeast, and allow to proof. It will become foamy and triple in bulk. Whisk the mixture gently to be sure all the yeast blends with the water.

In another bowl, mix flour and salt.

When the yeast has proofed, pour it over the flour and salt, and mix. If the dough seems dry, add a bit of olive oil. Turn out onto a floured counter and knead briefly. (The more kneading you do of any bread dough, the finer the texture. We like our French bread to have that wonderful texture that invites one to tear it into serving pieces.)

Wash and dry the bowl, and coat with olive oil. Return the dough to it, turn to coat with oil, and place in a warm spot to rise until doubled in bulk.

Sprinkle an ungreased baking sheet with cornmeal. Divide the dough into two parts and roll each into a long loaf. Try to work out any cracks. They will enlarge during baking. Place them on the baking sheet. Slash the tops shallowly and diagonally several times with a knife to keep the bread from baking unevenly.

If you want a crisp crust, spritz the loaves with water, or brush them with a combination of equal parts cold water and egg white, beaten together. Place in a cold oven, and turn the temperature to 400. Bake for 20-30 minutes.

### *Foccacia*

Follow the recipe above, being sure to add olive oil to the dough. After kneading, divide the dough into halves. Press each half onto a baking sheet that has been sprinkled with corn meal. Sprinkle the dough with flour to prevent rolling pin from sticking. Roll the dough with a rolling pin until you have a flat, round shape, about ½ inch thick. Brush the top with olive oil and prick it multiple times with a fork. At this point, you can bake it in a preheated oven at 400 degrees for 20 minutes, and then eat it as bread – tear it and, if you like, cover the pieces with cheese, tomatoes, garlic spread, or anything else that is fresh and toothsome.

For a more elaborate foccacia, tuck into the unbaked dough your favorite combinations of herbs and vegetables, such as diced garlic, halved Greek olives, rosemary, and slices of marinated artichoke. Sprinkle the top with shredded Parmesan cheese. Bake as above. Cut into squares and serve. (Note: The only unsuccessful topping I've tried is dried tomatoes, which burn. You can use Feta instead of Parmesan, but the watery nature of good Feta means that it will soak the dough. Better to add it after baking.)

### *Potato Bread*

(From *Beard on Bread*, by James Beard)

This recipe makes a nice, firm white loaf, wonderful for toast or to use in place of French bread: for the latter, just brush with olive oil, sprinkle with garlic powder or slivers of fresh garlic, and a little dried or fresh basil.

6 medium potatoes, or enough for two C mashed potatoes  
2 T yeast  
1 T sugar  
5 C warm water (100-115 degrees)  
4 lbs organic white flour (about 16 C)  
2 T salt

Peel the potatoes and cut into thin slices. Cook until thoroughly done, then drain, mash until fine, and set aside to cool.

In a large bowl, combine sugar and 1 C warm water. Sprinkle the yeast on top. Gently whisk in 6 T flour until ingredients are thoroughly combined. Set aside, covered, in a warm place for 30 minutes. The starter should be bubbly.

Add a bit of warm water to the potatoes and mash again – this works out the lumps and makes the potatoes mix with flour easily.

To the starter, add the potatoes, 4 C warm water, and the salt. Stir in the flour a cup at a time until the dough coheres. Turn the dough onto a well-floured board and knead, adding flour from the board as necessary, until the dough is firm and elastic.

Wash the bowl and coat with olive oil. Place the dough in the bowl and turn to coat it with the oil. Cover and put in a warm place to rise until the dough has doubled in bulk.

Put the dough on the floured board and cut into four loaves. Knead each, being sure that there are no fissures – these will become big cracks during baking. Place in greased bread pans, cover, and let rise in a warm place again.

Preheat the oven to 350. Slash the tops of the loaves. Bake for about 35 minutes, until bottoms and tops are brown. Remove from bread pans, return to oven, and turn the heat off. The bread will become firm as the oven slowly cools.

### *Rye Bread*

This bread requires two steps, but produces four delicious loaves. It is better to make this bread over two days, because it has a chance to “sour” and the result will be more flavorful, but in a pinch, you can make the whole thing in one day.

#### *Starter*

5 C sourdough

1 bottle dark beer

1 C dark molasses

5 tsp salt

2 lbs dark rye organic flour

2 T caraway seed

Mix after adding each ingredient. Cover the starter and leave it in the kitchen overnight.

The next morning, you will need

About 5 C organic white flour – adjust as needed to make a firm, moist dough

5 T yeast

4 C warm water -- (100-115 degrees)

(Note: the more water you use, the more white flour you will need to use. If you want more rye flavor in your bread, cut down on the water.)

2 T sugar

In a separate bowl, combine the water and sugar, and sprinkle the yeast over the top. Whisk the yeast in briefly, and allow to proof. Pour the yeast mixture into the starter, and begin adding flour, cup by cup. Keep adding flour and stirring until the dough is too stiff to stir any longer. Turn onto a well-floured board and knead, adding flour as

necessary. Knead until the ball of dough is glossy, firm, and “alive”. When you poke a finger in it, the indentation should move out again.

Wash the bowl, coat with olive oil, place the dough in it, and turn the dough to coat it with oil. Cover and put in a warm place until doubled in bulk. Turn the dough out onto the floured board and cut into four equal portions. Knead each thoroughly, being sure to work out any cracks that will turn into fissures during baking. Place each loaf in a well-greased bread pan, cover, and let rise to the tops of the pans. Slash the tops. Bake in a preheated 350 degree oven for about 40 minutes. Cool on racks. Freeze extra loaves.

### ***Oh, So Sour Dough Bread***

This is a variation on the recipe above. It requires more time, but the result is a very dense, very flavorful bread.

#### *Day One*

5 C sourdough starter  
1 bottle dark beer  
1 C dark molassas  
5 tsp salt  
2 lbs dark organic rye flour  
2 T caraway seed

Add these ingredients one by one, mixing thoroughly after each addition. Cover the dough with a towel, and let it sit on your kitchen counter.

#### *Day Two*

Let the dough sit, sour, and take in all the healthy yeasts and bacteria without which none of us would be alive.

#### *Day Three*

Proof 3 T yeast in 1 C warm water and 1 T sugar. Stir it into the dough, which will by now have developed a nice dark crust. Add, one cup at a time, 3 C or more, white flour. Turn the dough out onto a floured board, and knead briefly, and form it into a round ball. Wash the bowl, and coat with olive oil. Return the dough to the bowl, turn to coat with olive oil, place it on the kitchen counter, and cover with a towel.

#### *Day Four*

Put the bowl in a warm spot until the dough has doubled in bulk. Remove the dough from the bowl, place on a floured surface, cut into four chunks, and shape these into loaves. Knead as little as possible. Place loaves into baking pans that have been coated with olive oil, put them in a warm spot, and allow to rise. They won't rise much more.

Preheat oven to 350, and bake bread for 40 minutes.

### ***Five Rise Rye Bread***

(from MariaThun, *2009 Biodynamic Calendar*)

"Since all the grains we grow in our experiments were tested for quality, we have used our own raising agents (without additives) for bread baking to produce a good loaf. Besides sour milk, buttermilk,

wey and syrup we have also tried to bake with honey and have developed a recipe that has proved its worth over many years. One heaped teaspoonful of flower honey is stirred well in a glass of warm water (50C, 120F) and then mixed with 250g of finely ground rye meal. This small amount of dough is made in the evening and kept warm overnight. It should be at a temperature of about 26-30C by the stove or next to a hot plate, which is set very low. Next morning add the same amount of rye meal and warm water or wey. In the evening add the rest of the flour (approximately 60% of the total) to the prepared dough with sufficient warm water. At this stage you can add a little linseed, caraway, fennel or something similar and leave it to rise overnight. Next morning add salt and finish the dough. When it begins to rise again the loaves are formed. Let them rise well, put them in a preheated oven and bake them for a good hour. Rye is easy to digest when it has gone through these five stages. You can keep about 500g of the finished dough and leave it in an earthenware pot. After it has risen again a little, it should be sprinkled with salt, covered with grease-proof paper and stored in a cool place (not the fridge). When you want to do some more baking, take the pot from the cool place in the morning and add a teaspoon of honey, which has been stirred in a glass of warm water. Then keep the pot warm. In the evening you can start on the main dough and proceed as described above. You can also begin from stage one again, but then it will take longer with this kind of sour dough. Rye should rise five times. Wheat, barley, and oats need to rise only three steps. Success depends on the warmth of the baking area."

### ***Wheat Bread***

This recipe is adapted from *Beard on Bread*, by James Beard.

This is a fast bread to make: it requires no kneading (so you don't have to clean the kitchen counter) and rises once, in the baking pans.

7 & ½ C organic whole wheat flour

1 T sugar

3 T yeast

4 C warm water (approximately)

4 T molasses

2 T salt

Olive oil for greasing bread pans

Put the whole wheat flour in a large mixing bowl and put the bowl in the oven turned to the lowest setting. Both the bowl and the flour should be warm when you make the dough.

Put the sugar in a small bowl, add warm water (about 115 degrees), gently whisk, and allow the yeast to dissolve. Gently whisk in the molasses and allow the mixture to proof. Add another cup of warm water. Combine the flour, salt, and yeast mixture. Stir, adding enough more warm water (about 1 cup) to make a wet, sticky dough. Place the

dough directly into three greased bread pans. Cover, set in a warm spot, and allow the dough to rise to nearly the tops of the pans. (This will happen very quickly.) Bake at 350 in a preheated oven for 35 minutes. Remove bread from pans, turn the oven off, and, if necessary, return loaves to the oven, putting them directly on the rack to firm up.

### ***150% Whole Wheat Bread***

This recipe is adapted from the Molly Katzen's *The Enchanted Broccoli Forest*. It produces a fine grained, rather sweet bread that is great for sandwiches or toast.

#### *The Mix*

1 C uncooked bulgar  
1 C boiling water  
1 T salt  
4 T melted butter  
4 T dark molasses  
1 & ½ C golden raisins  
1 C uncooked whole wheat cracked grain cereal

#### *The Sponge*

1 T yeast  
1 C water (110-115 degrees)  
1 T molasses  
1 & ½ C whole wheat bread flour

#### *The Rest*

3-4 C whole wheat bread flour  
Olive oil for the bowl and pans

*Make the mix:* combine bulgar and water in a medium bowl. Cover and let stand 30 minutes. Add remaining ingredients, stir, cover, and let cool to room temperature.

*Make the sponge:* Dissolve the yeast in the warm water in a large bowl. Add molasses. Beat in flour, and let rise in a warm place for 30-45 minutes. Sponge should be bubbly.

*Add the rest:* Beat the mix into the risen sponge. Add flour, one cup at a time, until the dough is well blended. Turn out onto a floured counter top and knead. Wash the bowl, coat with olive oil, and return the dough to it. Place in a warm spot to rise until doubled in bulk. Cut the dough in half, shape into two loaves in greased bread pans, being sure to press the dough into the corners. Let rise until the dough reaches the tops of the pans. Bake for 45 minutes at 375 degrees. Cool on racks.

### ***Sunflower and Millet Bread***

This recipe is also adapted from *The Enchanted Broccoli Forest*. It produces subtly flavored, firm textured bread, with a wonderful crunch from the sunflower seeds.

*The Mix*

1 & ½ C water  
1 C uncooked millet  
4 T melted butter  
4 T honey  
2 & ½ tsp salt

*The Sponge*

1 T yeast  
1 C water (110-115 degrees)  
1 T honey  
1 C white flour

*The Rest*

1 C or more sunflower seeds  
2 C whole wheat bread flour  
2-3 C white flour

*Make the mix:* Bring 1 & ½ C water to a boil in a medium saucepan. Add the millet, cover, and turn the heat to very low. Cook for 15 minutes, or until all the water is absorbed and the millet is tender. Fluff with a fork, add the remaining mix ingredients, and stir until well combined. Let it cool to room temperature.

*Make the sponge:* Place honey in a large bowl, cover it with the water, sprinkle with yeast and whisk briefly to blend. Whisk in the flour, and set to rise in a warm place for 30-45 minutes until it is risen and bubbly.

*Add the rest:* Beat the mix into the sponge, along with the sunflower seeds. Add the flour, a cup at a time. When the dough is blended, turn out onto a floured counter top and knead until it is glossy and makes a firm ball. Wash the bowl, coat with olive oil, and place the dough in it turning the ball to coat it with the oil. Allow to rise until doubled in bulk.

Place the dough on a floured counter top, divide into two equal parts, and briefly knead each. Place into greased bread pans, and flatten, making sure that the dough fills the corners. Allow to rise until it nearly reaches the tops of the pans.

Bake for 40 minutes at 375, until tops are nicely browned and loaves are firm. Cool on racks.

**Note:** Yeast is activated by bacteria, which remain dormant while the yeast is in its dry, granulated form. Keep it in the refrigerator. When you sprinkle it over warm water sweetened with honey, sugar, or molasses, the bacteria become active. You will see the granules sink and start to bloom. When ready, all the granules will be dissolved and the top of the water foamy. (I never cease to enjoy watching this process.) If all the granules don't sink, whisk gently. Add the proofed yeast to the flour immediately.

Sourdough is marvelous. A starter can be handed down from generation to generation. Pioneer women used to tuck it in bed with them on cold nights to keep the



bacteria alive, and it served as a rising agent for their biscuits and bread in the absence of commercial yeast.

You can buy a packaged sourdough starter and then keep it going. We got a cup of starter from the local bakery fifteen years ago and have kept it alive ever since. When I use some for bread, biscuits, or pancakes, I refresh the remainder with equal parts of milk and organic white flour. I whisk those in, a cup at a time, then set the sourdough out, lightly covered, overnight. In the morning, it is bubbly. I cover it tightly and return it to the refrigerator. If there is a film of liquid on the top the next time I want to use it, I just stir it in. Tupperware containers work very well for keeping sourdough.

You can also make your own sourdough. Just place a mix of equal parts of milk and flour on your kitchen counter, and the bacteria and yeasts present in the air will inculturate the mix in a few days. Watch it carefully. When the mix is bubbly, it is time to refrigerate it. Otherwise, the bacteria will devour all the flour and water, and you'll have a dead mix.

This process is a good example of just how local real foods are. A few years ago, there was a big to-do about San Francisco sourdough bread. What people didn't pay attention to is that San Francisco sourdough is possible only in San Francisco – that each locale has different bacteria and yeasts in the air than anywhere else. So make your own, and be proud of its unique qualities.

### *Whole Wheat Sourdough Pancakes*

These pancakes are wholesome, delicious, and filling. Because of their nut-like flavor, we prefer strawberry jam to maple syrup as a topping.

3 eggs  
1 C milk  
2 C sourdough  
1 T baking soda  
1/3 tsp salt  
2 tsp baking powder  
1 T vegetable oil  
1/4 C sugar  
1 & 3/4 C whole wheat flour

Cook in a non-stick pan, and enjoy! We find that these keep beautifully for next-day breakfast or snacks.