

James Hillery's basic white loaf recipe and top bread tips

Basic White Loaf

500g Finest Strong White Flour
7g dried fast action yeast
10g rapeseed oil
7g sea salt
300ml lukewarm water

Makes 1 x 2lb loaf

Oven, 220°C fan/240°C/430°F/Gas 8.

1. Grease the bread tin.
2. Place the flour, salt, yeast and oil into a large mixing bowl. Mix the fat through the flour and make a well in the centre of the flour mixture.
3. Add most of the water to the well, keeping a little in reserve, and mix to a soft dough. Add the remaining water if necessary.
4. Tip the dough onto a worksurface and knead for 8-10 minutes.
5. Place the dough back into the bowl and cover with oiled cling film or a damp tea towel. Rest in a warm place until the dough doubles in size. This will take approximately 45 minutes.
6. First shape the dough into a ball, then fold to the shape of the tin.
7. Place the dough piece into the tin, seam down, cover with oiled cling film or a damp tea towel. Put in a warm place and allow to rise about 1cm above the tin. This will take 45-60 minutes.
8. Uncover and bake in a preheated oven, 220°C fan/240°C/430°F/Gas 8. Bake for 30-35 minutes.
9. Remove the loaf from the tin. Check it is baked by tapping the bottom of the loaf - it should sound hollow. Place on a wire rack to cool.

Top Bread Tips

1. Use a digital scale. Small variations in the quantities of yeast, salt and liquid can make a big difference to your dough. Also weigh your water, 1ml = 1g
2. Use the best ingredients you can afford. Bread has only a few ingredients, so using a quality flour and salt will make a difference to the flavour.
3. Make sure you use bread flour. Ideally a protein content of 12g + per 100g.
4. For ease, all ingredients should be at room temperature, including the water. If you see recipes stating tepid water or body temperature water, it can be subjective and vary wildly, which will affect the proving time.
5. Ideally you should allow your dough to hydrate (autolyse) for 10 minutes before you start kneading. Mix the flour and water together, leave for 10 minutes and then add in the remaining ingredients and knead. This starts the gluten development and makes kneading easier.

6. When you start kneading, resist the temptation to add flour to the work surface. The dough will become less sticky as you knead. You need the resistance of the dough sticking to the bench to help with the kneading process.
7. Once the dough is smooth and elastic, perform the windowpane test. Take a small ball and gently stretch so the dough becomes transparent, and you can see through it. If it snaps quickly, knead for a little longer.
8. Allow the dough to double in size for the first prove (bulk fermentation) and to grow about three quarters in the final prove. If you gently press the dough with your finger, it should leave an imprint that remains or very slowly springs back. If it springs back quickly, leave a little longer.
9. Preheat your oven for at least 20 minutes.
10. Add a tray of hot water to the oven when you bake to help the loaf rise.
11. Resist all temptation and do not cut the loaf until it is cool. This allows the crumb to set properly.

Additional Terminology

Bakers Percentages:

Bread recipes are often expressed in baker's percentage. In using baker's percentage, each ingredient in a formula is expressed as a percentage of the flour weight, and the flour weight is always expressed as 100%.

So, for the basic white loaf we are making the % would be:

Ingredient	Pct	Weight
Flour	100%	500g
Salt	1.4%	7g
Dried yeast	1.4%	7g
Water	60%	300ml
Oil	2%	10g

Autolyse:

An autolyse is the gentle mixing of the flour and water in a bread recipe, followed by a rest period up to 1 hour. After the rest, the remaining ingredients are added, and kneading begins.

Gluten:

Gluten is made up of two key components.

- Gliadin- sticky and very extensible
- Glutenin- gives strength and elasticity

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