

Wholemeal Loaf



Options

The ingredients listed below are to make **one** or **two** 1lb wholemeal loaves or cobs. You can optionally use a pre-ferment to improve the flavour of these loaves. Two types of ferment are outlined below: sponge mixtures and old dough.

In the wholemeal loaves online workshop we will use an "old dough" pre-ferment. Read the tips at [●](#). It's optional. You will still produce good loaves without it.

Ingredients

In red for a 1lb loaf approx 480g in a 6" x 4" tin or as a cob. In blue for two, either in tins or as cobs or as one 2lb loaf.

190g 380g wholemeal bread flour

90g 180g strong white flour

4g 8g salt

4g 6g dried yeast (if not active yeast dissolve in some of the water first)

14g 28g muscovado sugar optional (adds flavour, retains moisture)

160g 320g warm water (warmer if flour is cold)

18g 36g olive oil

Mixing and kneading

Mix the **flours**, **sugar**, **yeast**, **salt** and **warm water** until all the flour is incorporated in the dough. Knead the dough briefly then add the **olive oil**. **●** Now knead the dough for about 10 minutes. A wet dough is messier but will rise better so think twice about adding extra flour. Once kneaded place the dough in a moistened bowl and slightly moisten the top surface. Residual oil in the bowl may provide enough moisture. Cover the dough and leave in a warm place for 1 hour.

To shape into loaves and prove

Tip the dough out and knock the gas out of it (knocking back). Roll into a log shape. Place in a lightly oiled tin, seam down. The tins should be no more than two-thirds full. Alternatively shape to form a cob. Cover and leave in a warm place to prove for 45 minutes. Turn on the oven at 200°C about 20 minutes into the prove and have a cup of water ready to pour into a heated heavy tray in the bottom of the oven immediately the loaves go in. This is to improve the crust. Remove after 5 minutes.

Preparing the loaf for the oven

Dust the top of the loaf lightly with white flour or semolina then cut diagonal slits 1/2 inch deep to allow the dough to continue to expand in the oven and to allow excess gas/steam to escape without splitting the loaf. If the dough seems about to collapse (over proved) when you try to make a cut then abandon the slashing and just get it in the oven as quickly and gently as possible.

Baking

Putting say four of these loaves into the oven adds nearly two kilos of cool dough so the temperature will drop quite a bit. Allow for this by having the oven around 20°C hotter than normal at first. Reduce the temperature setting once the oven has recovered to the temperature you want.

Take care with the way you fit the tins into the oven. If two tins are too close three sides of the loaves may be baked but the sheltered side may be poorly fired because there is no stream of hot air between the tins at that point.

Bake at 180°C (170°C fan oven) for 45-55 minutes. It is done when the top, sides and bottom are brown and the shoulders of the loaf are firm. If loaves are soft on the bottom or the shoulder put them back in the oven upside down without the tins for another 5 minutes or so. Remove the loaves from the bread tins immediately and cool on wire trays. The appearance of a loaf which was overproved can be livened up with a top glaze of olive or walnut oil. This bread keeps well and freezes well with little loss of flavour or freshness. Butter, jam, cheese?

Pre fermentations

Sponge mixtures or use of "old dough" gives a better taste to the bread and help to make the bread more digestible. You can use either of these methods (but not both at once) with almost any breads. By using only a small amount of yeast in the ferments other bacteria are able to multiply. Warmer wetter ferments (also called poolish) give a softer flavour. Cooler firmer ferments (biga) give a sour flavour.

Using a sponge mixture

A sponge mixture is a one off made 8 to 24 hours beforehand. For a sponge mixture use around ¼ to ½ of the flour from the recipe. You can then add the same weight of water (from the water in the recipe) for a ferment which gives a sweet tasting bread. Reduce the amount of water to ⅔ of the flour weight in the sponge mixture for a more acidic bread. You choose.

Sponge mixture for the wholemeal loaf recipe above (one loaf):

(mixed the previous evening)

120g lukewarm water

60g white bread flour

1g dried yeast or 2g fresh yeast

60g wholemeal bread flour

Making the sponge mixture – 15 minutes

Dissolve the **yeast** in the **water** in a 2 litre bowl then mix in the **white** and **wholemeal flour**. Cover the bowl and leave overnight at 15 to 20°C. The sponge will rise then fall back but will revive when you add the remaining ingredients.

Remaining ingredients

130g wholemeal flour

30g strong white flour

4g salt

1g dried yeast

40g water (warmer if the sponge is cold)

14g of soft brown sugar (optional)

18g olive oil

Add the remaining dry ingredients to the sponge mixture. Before you add the remaining water think about the temperature of the sponge. If it was cool then make the water warm enough to give you a warm dough. Bring the dough together, knead briefly then add the olive oil. Now continue as in the main instructions above at 

Using "old dough"

Unlike the sponge mixture the old dough rolls on from one baking to the next several days or a week later. In order to get this going you need to make extra dough **just once** in order to have

a chunk to cut off and save as the "old dough" for next time. The long cool ferment of the old dough will encourage bacteria which produce flavour from acetic and lactic acid. My simple suggestion to avoid arithmetic is that you make enough dough for one additional loaf the first time. Every bake after that you will have one loaf's worth of old dough to add to your fresh dough, and one loaf's worth of dough to cut off after kneading to save in a box in the fridge for next time.

● If you are using "old dough" take it out of the fridge the evening before you bake and leave it somewhere warmish. Knead it in to the new dough once all the other ingredients have been added. Remember to cut off the same amount as you added (in this case approx. 480g) just before you shape the dough. Store in the fridge for your next bake, up to 7 days.

A possible routine to bake wholemeal loaves once a week using old dough.

The first day make enough dough for say five loaves but bake only four. The dough for an extra loaf is made only once. This "left over" dough goes in the fridge and becomes the old dough. Before the next baking (anything up to a week later) the old dough comes out of the fridge soon enough to warm up before being added to the fresh dough. For the next batch of loaves make enough dough for four (or three or two or one) loaves then knead in the old dough. When the dough is cut into four or three or two pieces remove one loaf's worth to put back in the fridge as the old dough for the following baking day.

If four wee loaves is too much for you in a week, see the diagram further down. Basically you want to make enough new dough for the number of loaves you need plus one loaf's worth of old dough from the fridge.

Altering the size

You may want to make larger or smaller loaves in which case you need to adjust baking time and temperature. The larger the loaf the longer it needs but at a lower temperature so that the heat penetrates to the centre before the top is blackened. Conversely, with smaller doughs increase the temperature and reduce the baking time. Also, this dough doesn't have to go in a loaf tin. It could equally well be a small cob or be divided up into rolls.

If you want to make several loaves then simply multiply up all the ingredients except for the yeast which you should increase by approximately 75% if you are doubling a recipe.

Your flour versus my flour

The amount of water in the recipe above is accurate for the flour I use but your flour may absorb more or less. Hold back a little of the liquid the first time to see what happens. The same goes for adjusting the ratio of white to wholemeal or substituting other flours such as rye or malt. Wholemeal absorbs more liquid than white which absorbs more than rye. Try **Mungoswells** strong wholemeal flour for this bread (from Real Foods, Weigh-to-go).

Too much wholemeal bread? Try croutons

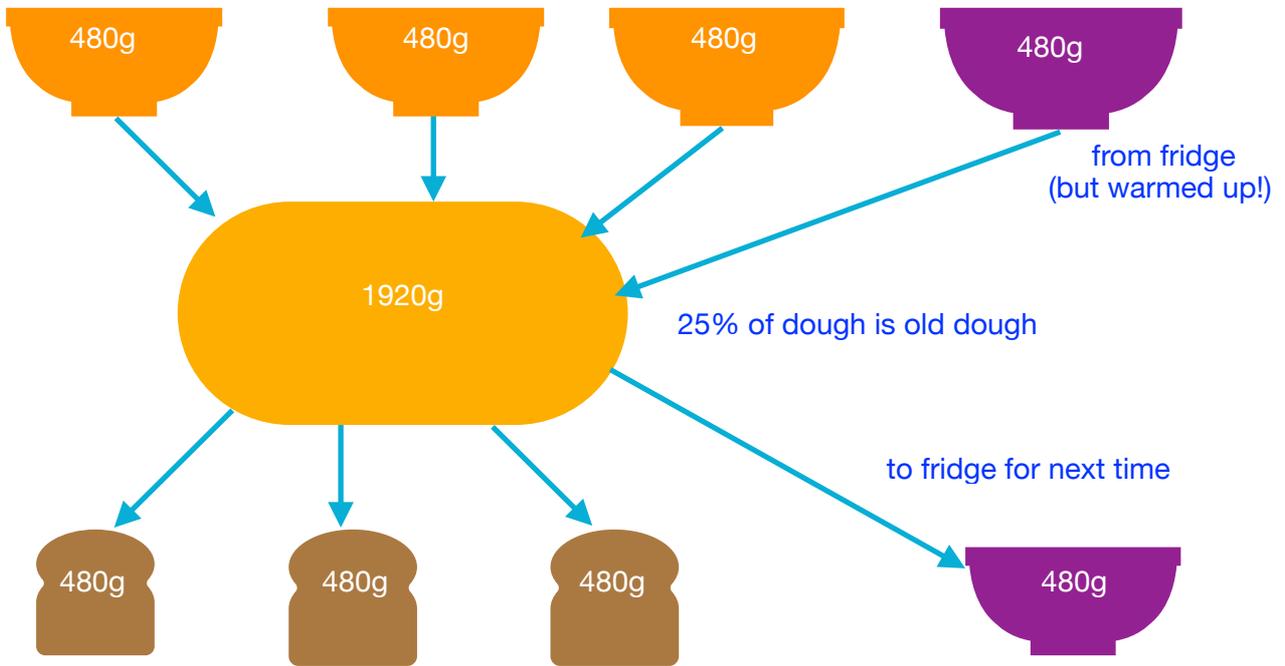
Cut the bread into roughly one inch cubes then toss them in a bowl with olive or sunflower oil so the cubes are moistened, not soaked. Sprinkle with salt, dried herbs de Provence and perhaps a sprinkle of chilli flakes. Spread the cubes out on a baking tray then bake in a pre-heated oven at 150°C for about 30 minutes, shaking or stirring now and then. They should be crunchy but still a wee bit soft in the middle when you take them out of the oven.

These are good in soup and salad but also disappear somehow without help from any other food! I often make an extra loaf just to make croutons with.

In the diagram below you can easily see how this old dough routine can be adjusted when you bake your bread to produce one/two/three or four loaves.

With 480g of old dough we could make 6 loaves (80g old dough each) but I haven't tried that. More loaves than that would mean too low a proportion of old dough, I think.

New dough for three loaves



New dough for two loaves

