

Crusty White Sourdough Bread

Ingredients

450g strong white flour plus 50g semolina or coarse wholemeal

250g leaven

220g warm water

10g sugar

25g olive oil

10-15 g sea salt (to taste)

Method

This recipe produces a sticky dough. You could add 10g to 30g more water for a softer dough which will be harder to handle but will produce a pleasingly holey loaf.

Mix

Dissolve the salt in a little of the water and set aside. Mix the rest of the water and the leaven, sugar and add both the flours. Mix until it starts to come together, then add the salt water. Mix well, turn onto a lightly floured surface and start kneading. Once all the dry flour is incorporated add the olive oil.

Knead

Knead for about 10 minutes more. Form into a round and place in a floured bowl. Cover with plastic or put in a plastic bag for 2 hours in the warm.

Prove

Turn the loaf out onto a floured surface and with floured hands, work it into a round. Leave this to rest for 10 minutes, then form your final shape.

Place the loaf with the seam side up into a well floured banneton or well floured basket or bowl lined with a well floured tea towel. Set aside covered with a cotton tea towel/cloth and then plastic. If the loaf is proved in a basket under plastic it will sweat and possibly stick to the basket. The tea towel absorbs excess moisture. Leave to rise for about 6 to 8 hours. Alternatively put the dough in a cool place overnight then bake in the morning.

Turn out & bake

Pre-heat the baking sheet or baking stone so that you turn the loaf onto a hot surface. Turn the loaf out onto the baking sheet and slash it with a very sharp blade.

Heat the oven to 250°C. Place the loaf in the oven and reduce heat to 220°C. After 15 minutes, turn the heat down to 200°C. It should take 35-40 minutes to bake.

It will rise nicely and open out the cuts and have some good colour. Invert the baked loaf and tap it for that hollow sound, and if you aren't convinced, return it to the oven upside down for 5 minutes.

