



## WHOLEMEAL BREAD

This recipe uses a starter sponge which helps the yeast to get going. The quantities below make three small loaves each approx 430 g in 6" x 4" tins

### Sponge ingredients

*500g lukewarm water around 35°C  
5g dried yeast or 10g fresh yeast  
40g of dark brown sugar, molasses or dark muscovada.  
300g wholewheat flour, 125g strong white flour.*

### Making the sponge mixture – 15 minutes

Measure the **lukewarm water** into a large baking bowl.  
Sprinkle the **yeast** and **sugar** over the water and stir lightly to dissolve.  
Add **flour** a cup or so at a time, stirring briskly after each addition. As the mixture thickens, begin beating.  
Beat until the batter is smooth, about 100 times, incorporating as much air as possible,.

### Setting the dough to rise – 60 minutes

Place the bowl in warm place covered with a tea towel for 60 minutes. Alternatively, leave covered in a warm place overnight. The sponge will rise then fall back, but will start working again when you move on to the next step on the following morning. This is convenient, gives a better taste to the bread, and also makes the bread easier to digest.

### Remaining ingredients

*10g salt  
50g olive oil  
approx 400g whole wheat flour*

### Adding the oil, salt and the remaining flour – 15 minutes

Pour on the **oil** and sprinkle in the **salt**. Stir around side of bowl and fold into the centre, turning the bowl as you do so until the oil and salt are incorporated  
Add the rest of the **flour** folding the wet mixture in on top of dry ingredients and turning the bowl as you do so until all the flour is incorporated in the dough.

### Kneading the dough – 15 minutes

Use whatever style of kneading suits you. A wet dough is messier but will rise better so do not be tempted to add extra flour.

Place the dough in the oiled bread bowl smooth side down, and then turn it over so the creases are on the bottom. The oiled surface will prevent a crust from forming on the dough. Cover the dough with a cloth and set it in a warm place.

### **Rising and punching down the dough - 50 minutes plus 45 minutes**

Let the dough rise for about 50 minutes until nearly doubled in size.

Punch the dough down by pushing fist into the dough steadily and firmly.

Cover the dough again and leave it in a warm place then let it rise for 45 minutes, again till it has nearly doubled in size.

### **To shape into loaves and prove – 35 minutes**

Turn on the oven.

Turn the dough onto the board.

Cut into three equal pieces, shape into balls by folding dough to center all the way around. Turn the smooth side up, and tuck in the dough all the way around then let the balls sit for five minutes. Roll up the dough into a log shape. Square off sides and ends then pinch the seams together all the way along.

Place the loaves in lightly oiled tins with seam up. Dough should fill the tins one-half to two-thirds full.

Flatten the dough out with backs of fingers.

Turn loaf over so the seam is now on the bottom. Press again into shape of pan with backs of fingers.

Cover and leave in a warm place to prove for 15-25 minutes from the finish of the last loaf.

### **Preparing the loaves for the oven - 5 minutes**

Dust with flour then cut diagonal slits ½ inch deep to allow the dough to continue to expand in the oven.

### **Baking – 50 minutes**

Bake at 180<sup>0</sup> C for 45-55 minutes, depending on the size of the bread tins. Spray water inside the oven but not directly on the loaves immediately after you pop the loaves in. Spray again after 5 minutes to keep the top soft so that the loaves can continue to rise. The bread is done when the top is golden brown, the sides and bottoms are golden brown, and the shoulders of the loaf are firm.

Remove the loaves from the bread tins immediately and cool on wire trays.

This bread keeps well and freezes well with little loss of flavour or freshness.