

BASIC HEARTH BREAD

Time Schedule:

Dough Starter (Sponge) minimum 1 hour, maximum 24 hours

Minimum Rising Time: about 3 hours

Oven Temperature: 475F, then 425F

Baking time: 30-40 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

Dough Starter (Sponge):

Bread Flour: 1 cup (156 grams)

Whole wheat flour or kamut flour: ¼ cup (36 grams)

Instant Yeast: 3/8 teaspoon (1.25 Grams)

Honey: 1¼ teaspoons (9 grams)

Water at room temperature: 1 1/3 liquid cup (322 grams)

Flour Mixture:

Hard Bread Flour: 1¾ cups plus 2 tablespoons (292 grams)

Instant Yeast: ½ teaspoon (1.6 grams)

Salt: 1½ teaspoons (10 grams)

METHOD:

1. Make the Sponge:

In a mixer bowl or other large bowl, place the sponge ingredients minus the salt and whisk until very smooth to incorporate air, about 2 minutes, until it is a thick batter, Cover with plastic wrap and set aside while you make the flour mixture.

2. Flour Mixture:

Combine the ingredients for the flour mixture, less the salt. in a medium bowl (if mixing by hand, reserve the two tablespoons of flour). Gently scoop the mixture onto the sponge to cover it completely. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and allow it to ferment for 1-4 hours at room temperature.

3. Mix the Dough:

Mixer Method: With the dough hook, mix on low speed for about 1 minute, cover and allow to rest for 20 minutes. Sprinkle on the salt and knead the dough on medium speed for about 7 minutes.

Hand Method: Add the salt and mix by hand until the flour is moistened. Knead the dough in the bowl until it comes to together. Then knead on the counter for 5 minutes to develop the gluten. You may need the reserved 2 tablespoons of flour to keep it from sticking. Cover with

the inverted bowl and allow it to rest for 20 minutes. Knead the dough for another 5 to 10 minutes until it is very smooth and elastic. If too sticky add the remaining reserved flour.

4. Let the Dough rise:

Using an oiled spatula, scrape the dough into a 2-quart bowl which has been lightly oiled. Push down the dough and lightly spray or oil the top and cover the top with plastic wrap. Allow the dough to rise at room temperature until doubled, about 1 hour. Once doubled in size, remove to counter, fold over and form into a rectangle and return to bowl, oil the top, cover and allow it to double again. 45 min. to 1 hour.

5. Shape the Dough and let it rise:

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured counter and press it down. It will still be sticky but use any additional flour sparingly. To make a free-form round loaf, round the dough into a ball about 6 inches x 2½ high and place on a prepared baking sheet. Cover the shaped dough with a large container and allow it to almost double again, 45 minutes to 75 minutes. It should now be 8" x 3 inches high.

6. Preheat the oven to 475F for one hour.

7. Slash and Bake the bread:

Make several 1/2 "deep slashes in the top of the dough. Bake for 10 minutes and then lower the temperature to 425F and continue baking for 20-30 minutes until the bread is golden brown.

8. Cool the Bread

For the best flavour development, allow the sponge to ferment for 1 hour at room temperature and then refrigerate for 8-24 hours. Allow to return to room temperature before using.

Traditional breads of the 18th and 19th centuries were done this way as their yeasts and starters were not as strong as today's. The longer fermentation of the sponge develops extra gluten strength for the dough, adds depth and complexity of flavour and increases the shelf life of the bread. It also makes it possible to use less yeast which allows the taste of the wheat to emerge.

GOOD LUCK! Taken from Rose Levy Beranbaum's: [The Bread Bible](#).