




MAINE GRAINS

Erek Porembski's slightly modified classic French loaf recipe:



Ingredients:

2 lbs flour
2 c Water
1.5 Tbsp Yeast
1 or 2 tsp salt (to your taste)

Method:

You'll need some additional flour for the surface where you will work the dough. If you have a sourdough starter, you should add about a half-cup of the starter and a half-cup or more flour to the recipe. I always figure my Polish addition as a 5 percent addition to the entire recipe.

I would measure warm water, add the yeast to that, then sift the flour and the salt together. After the yeast slurry looks foamy and creamy, mix it in several additions to your dry ingredients in a large mixing bowl or mixer with dough hook attached. Allow it to stand 2 minutes before further mixing. Then knead on a floured surface using the gathering technique for a few minutes until soft and workable. If using a mixer, use a low speed and set a timer so that you won't mix over 4 minutes. 2-3 should be sufficient if you watch carefully and sift additional flour if the dough appears sticky. The dough is ready to ferment.

At work, I use a commercial proofing cabinet to accelerate the fermentation and have bread ready in time for dinner, but I prefer to allow this dough a full 24-hour primary fermentation in the refrigerator.

After kneading, spray-oil a fresh bowl and transfer the dough into it. Spray some plastic wrap with oil as well and cover the dough loosely with it. Cover the whole works with a towel and forget about it a while. When you come back tomorrow, your dough will look droopy and sad, but flour up a surface, and it'll come back to life.

(Next day) Simply uncover it, roll it from the bowl onto a floured surface and dust it with fresh flour. Give it a quick knead and a few folds. Then give it a rest for a few minutes. Now, you are ready to form your loaves, rolls or whatever from your dough. Make your shape(s) and allow them appropriate proofing time before baking.

Heat oven to 350. Rolls should cook in about 15 minutes, breads, 20-30 or larger loaves up to an hour. When your kitchen thermometer reads 195F in the center of the loaf, it's done.

Allow it to cool for at least 15 minutes while carry-over baking is finishing. Hot, steamy bread is best 20-30 minutes out of the oven. Smaller rolls can be enjoyed more quickly. As a variation, I use this lean dough recipe as a basis for making **Garlic Knots** in the kitchen.

I add a few cups of fresh roasted garlic cloves, some Italian seasoning and milk powder to the dry ingredients, then while it's mixing, I drizzle it with Olive Oil. Adding the milk and oil turns this from a lean dough, to an enriched dough.

After fermenting for an hour at 114F, roll it into sheets, cut it into strips and knot them, tucking the ends under the knots. These proof for about half an hour, before they are baked at 350F.

Brush them with minced-garlic infused drawn butter and sprinkle with grated Parmesan as they come out of the oven. Kids love 'em.

Top image "Mrs Gagnon making buckwheat pancakes" by John Collier 1942 Library of Congress/U.S. Farm Security Administration. Bottom image "Garlic Knots" by Erek Porembroski.

