



Metfield Bakery

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NATURALLY LEAVENED WHEATEN BREAD

Serves: 12 or 2 very greedy people

Preparation time: Up to 24 hours, but don't be put off, it can be much quicker, just depends on how long you want to take and how good your starter is

Cooking time: 45 minutes

METHOD

1. First mix your rye starter. Depending on its vigour, this will be ready to use in between four and twelve hours (see 'thoughts on bread' blog for a more in depth discussion on natural leavens. If you mix your starter the night before, it will allow plenty of time the following day for you to plan your breadmaking schedule
2. Mix your vigorous bubbly starter into the other ingredients and knead for about 15 minutes by hand, 8 on speed 2 in a Kenwood or Kitchen Aid.
3. Allow the dough to prove at room temperature for about 8 to 10 hours, or until doubled in size. If you fermented your starter overnight and mixed the final dough in the morning at about 8am, then it should be about 4.30pm to 6.30pm by the time you are ready to mould the loaves.
4. Divide the dough into three equal parts, each should be around 950g in weight.
5. Mould and shape these into balls, and prove them in a basket of about 200mm across at the mouth, lined with linen (the lint free kind); this is to ensure some shape to the loaves as unsupported the dough is too slack to rise upwards and instead will spread outwards.
6. If you prove them at room temperature, they should take 45 minutes to an hour to prove. You can however, prove them in the fridge, which have the effect of slowing down the fermentation and give you greater flexibility on when you wish to bake them. Depending on temperature they can take up to 10 hours to prove in the fridge. If they seem to have stopped or you wish to only take four hours to prove them because that fits in with your plans, then take them out an hour before you wish to bake them and let them come up to room temperature and when they have then proved sufficiently, bake them. The beauty of retarding them is that the schedule becomes more flexible, and you can bake them whenever you feel like it. They will bake from cold too.
7. Once they are proved you are ready to score or 'scotch' them. Turn them out and do this however you please, but I find a chequerboard pattern easy and effective. If you wish them to burst more then bake them 'green' i.e. before they have reached their optimum size. We score and bake our 'batard' loaves green, whilst the cobs we leave to prove fully.
8. Place them on a 'peel'; this can be an upturned tray, sprinkled with semolina so that the dough doesn't stick to it and placed in the oven. Then, rather like a conjuror whipping a tablecloth from a table fully laden with china, whip the tray back out and all things being equal, the loaf should be left sitting, rather surprised, on the baking stone.
9. Bake in a preheated oven at 220°C and preferably on a 'baking stone' which is a clay tile placed in the oven and heated along with the oven to simulate a baker's oven. Steam if you can. The best of a bad bunch of methods is probably with a garden sprayer which has only ever had water in it and nothing else. Use this to spray inside the oven, and close the door quick. Repeat after about 5 minutes, and again close the door quick.
10. Turn the oven down after 15 minutes to about 205°C, and wait for about another half hour. Remove the loaves from the oven, tap them to see if they sound hollow, wait twenty minutes, and then rip into them. spread the first crusty slice with butter, then maybe some livery, porky terrine and pickles, and scoff till you're full

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