

## Artisan Bread In Five Minutes a Day by Jeff Hertzberg and Zoë François

### **The Secret: Keep Dough Refrigerated**

It is easy to have fresh bread whenever you want it with only five minutes a day of active effort. Just mix the dough and let it sit for two hours. No kneading needed! Then shape and bake a loaf, and refrigerate the rest to use over the next couple weeks.

### **Ingredients and Equipment**

Great breads really only require four basic ingredients: flour, water, yeast and salt. The rest is detail. Here's a short guide to the basic ingredients and equipment you'll need to make artisan loaves.

**Unbleached, white, all-purpose flour:** Has adequate protein (around 10 percent) to create a satisfying "chew," but low enough to prevent heaviness. We prefer unbleached flours because bleaching removes some protein, not to mention adding unnecessary chemicals.

**Whole wheat flour:** Contains the germ and bran, both of which are healthful and tasty. Together they add a slightly bitter, nutty flavor that many people enjoy.

**Bread flour:** For chewier bread, substitute bread flour (about 12 percent protein) for all-purpose white flour by decreasing the amount slightly (by about a quarter cup for every 6 cups of all-purpose).

**Yeast:** Use what's readily available and buy in bulk rather than packets, which are much more expensive.

**Salt:** Use noniodized coarse kosher or sea salt.

**Baking stone:** Use a high-quality, half-inch-thick stone. The porous stone absorbs moisture from your dough, allowing a thin, crackling, crisp crust to form — one of the keys to artisanal baking.

**Pizza peel:** This long-handled board helps slide doughs onto a hot stone. A cookie sheet or cutting board will work, but will be more difficult to handle.

**Broiler tray:** A pan to hold water for steam during baking.

### **The Master Recipe**

The artisan free-form loaf called the French boule is the basic model for all the no-knead recipes. The round shape (boule in French means "ball") is the easiest to master. You'll learn how wet the dough needs to be (wet, but not so wet that the finished loaf won't retain its form) and how to shape a loaf without kneading. And you'll discover a truly revolutionary approach to baking: Take some dough from the fridge, shape it, leave it to rest, then let it bake while you're preparing the rest of the meal.

Keep your dough wet — wetter doughs favor the development of sourdough character during storage.

**The Master Recipe: Boule** (Artisan Free-Form Loaf)      Makes 4 1-pound loaves

3 cups lukewarm water

1 1/2 tbsp granulated yeast (1 1/2 packets)

1 1/2 tbsp coarse kosher or sea salt

6 1/2 cups unsifted, unbleached, all-purpose white flour

Cornmeal for pizza peel

### **Mixing and Storing the Dough**

1. Heat the water to just a little warmer than body temperature (about 100 degrees Fahrenheit).
2. Add yeast and salt to the water in a 5-quart bowl or, preferably, in a resealable, lidded container (not airtight — use container with gasket or lift a corner). Don't worry about getting it all to dissolve.
3. Mix in the flour by gently scooping it up, then leveling the top of the measuring cup with a knife; don't pat down. Mix with a wooden spoon, a high-capacity food processor with dough attachment, or a heavy-duty stand mixer with dough hook, until uniformly moist. If hand-mixing becomes too difficult, use very wet hands to press it together. Don't knead! This step is done in a matter of minutes, and yields a wet dough loose enough to conform to the container.
4. Cover loosely. Do not use screw-topped jars, which could explode from trapped gases. Allow the mixture to rise at room temperature until it begins to collapse (or at least flatten on top), approximately two hours, depending on temperature. Longer rising times, up to about five hours, will not harm the result. You can use a portion of the dough any time after this period. Refrigerated wet dough is less sticky and easier to work with than room-temperature dough. We recommend refrigerating the dough at least three hours before shaping a loaf. And relax! You don't need to monitor doubling or tripling of volume as in traditional recipes.

## On Baking Day

5. Prepare a pizza peel by sprinkling it liberally with cornmeal to prevent the loaf from sticking to it when you slide it into the oven.  
  
Sprinkle the surface of the dough with flour, then cut off a 1-pound (grapefruit-sized) piece with a serrated knife. Hold the mass of dough in your hands and add a little more flour as needed so it won't stick to your hands. Gently stretch the surface of the dough around to the bottom on four "sides," rotating the ball a quarter-turn as you go, until the bottom is a collection of four bunched ends. Most of the dusting flour will fall off; it doesn't need to be incorporated. The bottom of the loaf will flatten out during resting and baking.
6. Place the ball on the pizza peel. Let it rest uncovered for about 40 minutes. Depending on the dough's age, you may see little rise during this period; more rising will occur during baking.
7. Twenty minutes before baking, preheat oven to 450 degrees with a baking stone on the middle rack. Place an empty broiler tray for holding water on another shelf.
8. Dust the top of the loaf liberally with flour, which will allow the slashing, serrated knife to pass without sticking. Slash a 1/4-inch-deep cross, scallop or tick-tack-toe pattern into the top. (This helps the bread expand during baking.)
9. With a forward jerking motion of the wrist, slide the loaf off the pizza peel and onto the baking stone. Quickly but carefully pour about a cup of hot water into the broiler tray and close the oven door to trap the steam. Bake for about 30 minutes, or until the crust is browned and firm to the touch. With wet dough, there's little risk of drying out the interior, despite the dark crust. When you remove the loaf from the oven, it will audibly crackle, or "sing," when initially exposed to room temperature air. Allow to cool completely, preferably on a wire rack, for best flavor, texture and slicing. The perfect crust may initially soften, but will firm up again when cooled.

10. Refrigerate the remaining dough in your lidded (not airtight) container and use it over the next two weeks: You'll find that even one day's storage improves the flavor and texture of your bread. This maturation continues over the two-week period. Cut off and shape loaves as you need them. The dough can also be frozen in 1-pound portions in an airtight container and defrosted overnight in the refrigerator prior to baking day.

### **Neapolitan Pizza Dough**      Makes 1 12- to 14-inch pizza to serve 2 to 4

The secrets to this pizza are to keep the crust thin, don't overload it, and to bake it quickly at a high temperature so it doesn't cook down to a soup. It's unlike anything most of us are used to eating — especially if you make fresh mozzarella!

1 pound pre-mixed boule dough  
Cornmeal for covering the pizza peel  
Topping: your favorite seasonal ingredients

1. 20 minutes before baking, preheat the oven with a baking stone (scraped clean) at your oven's maximum temperature — the hotter, the better. (Another option is to use the baking stone over a grill, which takes about two-thirds of the time.)
2. Prepare the toppings in advance. The key to a pizza that slides right off the peel is to work quickly.
3. Follow Step 5 of The Master Recipe (above).
4. Flatten the dough into a 1/8-inch-thick round with your hands and a rolling pin on a wooden board. Dust with flour to keep the dough from sticking. (A little sticking can help overcome the dough's resistance to stretching, though, so don't overuse flour.) You also can let the partially rolled dough relax for a few minutes to allow further rolling. Stretching by hand may help, followed by additional rolling. Place the rolled-out dough onto a liberally cornmeal-covered pizza peel.
5. Distribute your toppings over the surface, leaving some of its surface exposed so you can appreciate the individual ingredients — and the magnificent crust! — of the final product. No further resting is needed.
6. Turn on the exhaust fan (or use lower heat and bake a few minutes longer), because some of the cornmeal will smoke. Slide the pizza onto the stone (back-and-forth shakes can help dislodge it). Check for doneness in 8 to 10 minutes. Turn the pizza around if one side is browning too fast. It may need up to 5 more minutes.
7. Allow to cool slightly on a rack before serving.