
BASIC COUNTRY BREAD – HALF RECIPE

80% HYDRATION LOAF

INGREDIENTS

- 350g plus (**25g set aside**) 80°F/27°C water
- 100 g young Levain (young levain is considered levain that was fed about two-eight hours prior to use. It doesn't smell sour yet but is showing vigorous rise. Not the levain that has already collapsed.) **IF YOUR SOURDOUGH IS NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO LEAVEN BREAD YET; add 1/2 tsp instant yeast**
- 450g White Bread Flour
- 50g Whole Wheat Flour
- 10g kosher or sea salt (**hold back**)

METHOD

1. In a large mixing bowl, weigh 350g of 80°F/27°C water.
2. Add 100g of young levain and stir with your hand to disperse.
3. Add both flours to the water. Mix with your hand until all dry bits of flour are gone. Scrape your hand and the side of the bowl into the dough.
4. Cover and set aside for 25-40 minutes (autolyze).
5. After the dough has rested, sprinkle the salt over the surface of the dough and pour the additional 25g of warm water over the dough.
6. Mix salt in by squeezing the dough between your fingers. The dough will split apart at first but will come back together as you continue to squeeze the dough while turning the bowl.
7. As the dough comes together, fold the dough over itself a few times and transfer the dough to a plastic container or clear glass bowl. When you're learning to make bread it's important to see what's happening with the dough as it does the bulk ferment.
8. Cover with a towel. Place the dough somewhere warm. Try to maintain a temperature between 78°F - 82°F/25°C - 28°C. over the next four hours. This is the first rise aka bulk ferment.
9. During the bulk ferment, you will turn the dough **EVERY HALF AN HOUR FOR FOUR HOURS**. Turns are done in place of kneading.
10. To perform a turn: dip your hand in cold water and reach under the dough and turn it over on to itself, corner by corner until all four corners of the dough have been turned. Do not punch it down, just gently turn the dough and cover again.
11. In hour three of bulk ferment, the dough will begin to take on a billowy texture and the air bubbles will be large. Do your turns very gently as you do not want to deflate the dough.
12. After four hours, your dough should be very smooth and billowy, full of gassy air bubbles and have a lovely jiggle to it when you move the container. If the dough is slow (cold) continue to bulk ferment until the texture you are seeking is achieved.
13. Carefully pull the dough out of the container and on to an UNFLOURED work surface. Sprinkle the top of the dough lightly with flour. Using a bench scraper/dough divider, cut the dough in half and turn the dough over so the floured portion is now down on the work surface. Be careful to incorporate as little flour as possible from now on into your dough. The floured side of the dough will become the crust on your finished boule so always keep it to the outside.
14. Carefully pre-shape the dough into a round loaf. Don't worry about it being perfect, this is only the pre-shape. The object is to get the skin to a stage where it is taught and smooth without breaking.



15. Bring the sides gently to the middle so the boule takes on a round shape. Don't make more than four folds at this point. If you are an experienced bread maker: flip the boule over and, using the friction between the dough and bench, pull the dough towards you to tighten the outer skin. Always be very careful not to deflate the dough. Let the dough rest, covered, on the bench (table/countertop) for 30 minutes.
16. After the bench rest, the final shaping of the dough takes place. Lightly dust the top of the loaf with flour and, using your bench scraper, lift the dough from its resting place and flip it over so the floured side is against the surface of the bench again.
17. Folding the dough in thirds over itself; fold the side closest you up and over to the middle of the dough. Do the same on each side and top, gently pulling the dough away from the middle and then folding it back over to the middle. The final turn is the same as the first; gently pull the bottom of the dough away and fold it over the entire surface so the dough gently rolls over and reveals the top/floured side of the dough. All the folds should now be on the under side of the dough.
18. Using your hand, gently shape the dough by pulling the loaf towards you so the outer skin tightens against the loaf and makes a taught, smooth top.
19. Heavily flour a bowl lined with a tea towel. Transfer the dough ball to the bowl and place the lovely taught side of the dough against the floured side of the bowl. The bottom of the loaf now becomes the top – the rough, bottom side of the dough will be facing up. Cover loosely with a clean towel.
20. If baking today, set the dough in a warm place to rise undisturbed for 3-4 hours. If you want to bake it tomorrow, put in fridge now. The longer you leave the dough in the fridge the more sour the flavour will be. Any longer than 36 hours and most people find it unpleasantly sour. Experiment to see what you like.
21. Preheat oven to 500°F/260°C. Place your dutch oven with lid into the cold oven to preheat. Take one of your loaves out of the fridge if that's where they currently are fermenting. This oven pre-heat will take at least 20 minutes or more.
22. Prepare a sharp knife, bakers lame or razor blade to score the loaf. You have a choice: as soon as the dough is flipped into the dutch oven you can score it carefully and avoid burning your arm and hands on the hot dutch oven. Alternately, you may gently flip the dough onto a pre-cut piece of parchment paper, quickly score it and place it immediately in the hot dutch oven. Again, there is always a risk of burning yourself so be mindful not to touch the hot dutch oven with any part of your body not covered with heat proof gloves.
23. Immediately return the dutch oven to the hot oven, cover it with the lid lower the heat to 450°F/232°C. Set a timer for 20 minutes.
24. After 20 minutes, remove the lid and continue to bake for another 20 minutes or until the loaf is dark golden brown. If the bottom of the loaf becomes too dark, which often happens with cast iron dutch ovens, slide a sheet pan under the dutch oven and continue baking until the top is dark golden brown. The loaf is fully baked when dark brown and sounds hollow when tapped on the bottom. Cool on a rack for at least 30 minutes before you cut it, longer is better. Heat the dutch oven again and bake the 2nd loaf just like the first.

Watch these YouTube videos on shaping bread, making sourdough starter and baking in a dutch oven. Every resource you can tap into will make you the best baker you can be!

<https://youtu.be/hWXA8xFYu9A> how to shape a bread into a boule

<https://youtu.be/BJEHsvW2J6M> 15 Mistakes Most Beginner Sourdough Bakers Make

<https://youtu.be/vVx2oFFptG0> NEVER Throw Away Your Sourdough Starter!

