

Five Minute Artisan Bread

The web site that started this is <http://www.artisanbreadinfive.com>

Try googling '5 minute artisan bread' for other ideas.

You will need a small bucket to mix the dough and let it rise. I use a 5.5 L Décor bucket from the supermarket.

The book 'Artisan Bread in Five Minutes a Day' uses US measures and is a bit hard to get right. This is what I use:

650 g lukewarm water (or 600 g if using sourdough starter)
3 teaspoons salt
1.5 tablespoons dried yeast (or 5 tablespoons sourdough starter)
900 g plain white flour

If you want to use bread mix, leave out the salt. Alternatively, 600 g plain flour and 300 g wholegrain bread mix with 2 teaspoons of salt makes a nice loaf.

Directions:

Preparing Dough for Storage:

1. Warm the water slightly. It should feel just a little warmer than body temperature. Warm water will rise the dough to the right point for storage in about 2 hours (possibly 15 – 20 hours if using sourdough starter). With cold water it will need 3-4 hours.
2. Add the yeast (or sourdough starter) to the water in a 5 L, lidded (not airtight) plastic food container or food-grade bucket. Don't worry about getting the yeast to dissolve. If using sourdough starter it should dissolve easily.
3. Mix in the flour and salt - kneading is unnecessary. Add all of the flour at once. Mix with a wooden spoon; you're finished when everything is uniformly moist, without dry patches. It takes a few minutes, and will yield a dough that is wet and loose enough to conform to the shape of its container.
4. Allow to rise. Cover with lid (not airtight or it could explode the lid off). Allow the mixture to rise at room temperature until it begins to collapse (or at least flattens on the top), approximately 2 hours, depending on room temperature, and initial water temperature. Longer rising times, up to 5 hours, won't harm the result. Sourdough will take 15 – 20 hours to rise.
5. You can use a portion of the dough any time after this period. Fully refrigerated dough is less sticky and easier to work with than dough at room temperature.

On Baking Day:

6. A pizza paddle is handy for preparing your loaf, place a generous piece of baking paper down and sprinkle with flour. Sprinkle the surface of your refrigerated dough with flour. Pull up and cut about half the dough, using a serrated knife.

7. 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 all 4 sides, rotating the ball a quarter-turn as you go. Most of the dusting flour will fall off - that's fine, it isn't meant to be incorporated. The bottom of the loaf may appear to be a collection of bunched ends, but it will sort itself out during resting and baking.
8. The correctly shaped final product will be smooth and cohesive. The entire process should take no more than 30 - 60 seconds.
9. Rest the loaf and let it rise in the form, on the tray/pizza peel, for about 40 minutes. Depending on the age of the dough, you may not see much rise during this period. That's fine, more rising will occur during baking.
10. Twenty minutes before baking, preheat the oven to 230°C. Place an empty baking dish for holding water on any other shelf that won't interfere with the rising bread.
11. Dust and Slash. Dust the top of the loaf liberally with flour, which will allow the slashing knife to pass without sticking. Slash a quarter inch deep cross, diagonal lines, or straight down the centre using a serrated knife.
12. After a 20 min preheat you're ready to bake, even though the oven thermometer won't be at full temperature yet. Put your loaf in the oven. Pour about 1 cup of hot water into the baking tray and close the oven to trap the steam.
13. Bake for about 25 - 30 minutes, or until the crust is nicely browned and firm to the touch.
14. Store the rest of the dough in the fridge in your lidded (not airtight) container and use it over the next 14 days. The flavour and texture improves, becoming like sourdough. Even 24 hours of storage improves the flavour.
15. Don't wash the container. Make your next batch straight into it. After a few batches it will be nice and sour.

Maintaining the sourdough starter

1. If you haven't used the starter for a week and don't intend to use it any time soon, scoop out about half the starter and discard it.
2. After using the starter in your recipe (or discarding some as in step 1), add equal weights of plain white flour and water (eg 50g of each) to the starter to form a thick creamy batter. Don't worry too much about lumps.
3. Let it bubble away for an hour or so then put it in the fridge until next time.