



# BREAD ART

DECORATING  
& PAINTING  
EDIBLE BREAD  
FOR BEGINNERS



STEPHANIE PETERSEN

**B**BREAD  
ART  
BRAIDING  
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FRONT TABLE BOOKS  
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To the Bread of Life that has given me so much peace.

To darling children who tolerated a creative mother making roses  
while they made monsters out of play dough.

To a mother who taught me to draw on blank paper and make my  
own art.

To a father who gave me an eye for color and nature.



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# INTRODUCTION

**B**read has always been an integral part of my existence. I can think back on many happy moments at my mother's kitchen table as I gingerly rolled around a ball of dough while playing in the freshly milled, nutty smelling whole grain flour. If I think about bread too much, I almost cry with all the memories of love that it invokes. Bread for me is the embodiment of all the nurturing and joy that I've ever had in my life, and it is because of this fondness for the art of bread baking that I first started the study of bread professionally. It wasn't until I was several years into my experience as a professional baker that I realized what a blessing bread baking truly was to me. After a long week of work, I would often find myself in the kitchen at home baking again. This time instead of baking being the work of the day, it became the relaxation and meditation of my soul. I found that, without fail, when everything else in my life was a little too chaotic, bread was always grounding. It always had a slow and calming rhythm. Kneading the loaves was meditative, exacting, and artistic. It connected me to my creative soul and, by so doing, gave me the power to move forward with my life. Bread baking infused me with renewed zeal. It will do the same for you.

Bread baking, to my dismay, is becoming a completely lost art. Julia Child once said, "How can a nation be great when its bread tastes like Kleenex?" I'm a bit of an idealist. I know it. Gone are the days when mothers or grandmothers gather their children together to bake bread. Fathers who bake bread with their children are few and far between. I rarely see such a man. I hope to bring those days of bread baking back. I hope that by writing this book, I will inspire you to spend a little more time creating beauty.

I also realize we live in a busy world—if you never bake bread, you can still employ many of the bread-decorating techniques used in this book to

add embellishments to prebaked loaves purchased from your local bakery!

I hope to inspire nurturing and expression within your home and your heart. Many of life's greatest lessons of love and peace can be taught over a loaf of freshly made (or decorated) bread. I hope to simplify the process enough that, even in a busy world, you feel you can make bread a priority. If I only reach one amazing, new creative genius with this book, I hope it is your genius.



What you are holding in your hands is a starting point for your own bread-baking journey. If you're a seasoned baker, this is a remarkable reference for a form of bread baking you may have never experienced. If you are a new baker, this book will give you all that you need to become a breadmaker. If you are an artist looking for a new medium, this book will be an excellent resource for a new form of art! Beautiful artistic bread is easy to make, and I hope that you will want to come back to the kitchen time and time again. Get out your flour. Find your apron. It's time to once again create joy. Onward and upward we go!

# THE BASICS OF GOOD DOUGH FORMATION

## FLOUR

**T**he basic composition of the flour you use to make your bread dough will vary in protein content, depending on what kind of bread you are making. In this book, I use a variety of flours—not all flour is the same in terms of how it will bake and how it will act when manipulated and sculpted. For the base of your breads—meaning the main body of the loaf—I will often refer to the use of bread flour or high-protein flours. This is because the protein needed to form magnificent bread must be high enough for the gas that is produced during the fermentation process to be captured in the bread. This is often what will set apart a beautifully shaped loaf from a flat or squatty loaf.

## SPECIALTY FLOUR

The decorative bread used throughout this book is generally based with part all-purpose wheat flour and part rye or oat flour. The addition of the rye or oat flour will make for lower protein content. The shape of the decorative embellishments will be retained during baking when this lower protein flour

is used. Some of the decorative dough is sweetened or flavored. You'll find the one you prefer in your personal baking.

## SWEETENERS

Notice as you study the recipes throughout this book that some of the bread is sweet dough while others are less sweet and can be used for savory applications. I've tried as much as possible to make sure that the flavors will be complementary in each loaf. You'll find that your personal taste may require more or less sweetness. In most cases I tend to under-sweeten my loaves. Adding additional sugar may slow down how quickly the yeast works, which sounds crazy; though yeast "eats" sugar, it will not do well with a large addition of sugar. Stick to the recipe as closely as possible.

## YEAST

Yeast is a single-celled organism that feeds on sugar and, by so doing, expels carbon dioxide gas and alcohol. The process by which it works in conjunction with sugars and liquid is called *fermentation*. In most cases I prefer a long and slow fermentation with much lower yeast content in the dough than most standard recipes. This will give you the most complex and delightful texture and flavor. Adding more yeast will generally cause your bread to be coarse and have a less-refined characteristic. Of all the ingredients in breadmaking, the one most integral in its measurement is yeast. Use measuring spoons and tools that are designed for baking and not for the dinner table. When I refer to a specific measurement in a recipe, it is because I know that that measurement will work.

***WHEN WORKING WITH YEAST, HERE ARE A FEW THINGS TO REMEMBER:***

- ❖ Because yeast is a living organism, always use lukewarm water (less than 110°F) to active the yeast. Higher temperatures will usually kill the yeast and your bread will not rise.
- ❖ When yeast is active, never add salt directly to the water and yeast combination because it greatly inhibits yeast activity and can potentially kill the yeast. To keep this from happening, I always combine the salt with the flour.
- ❖ If you use a stronger yeast, such as a SAF or bread machine yeast, you will need less yeast in recipes. These super yeasts will cause the bread to rise about 30 percent faster than standard active dry yeast.
- ❖ As a general rule, use about half the amount of yeast you would use in a regular recipe if you are living over 3000 feet above sea level. Higher altitude baking requires less yeast to achieve success.
- ❖ Allow your dough to rise at a medium temperature, no higher than 85ñ90°F. This will allow the yeast to work at its optimum. Some recipes specify to raise the bread at room temperature, while others are put in the fridge to slow down the fermentation of the dough. If you keep your home cold or live in a colder climate, the bread will rise slower and may need to be put in a slightly warmed oven. I don't recommend putting loaves in the oven often or for the full amount of time since this method generally results in an overly yeasty flavor in the bread.

## SALT

Salt is not merely for added flavor enhancement in bread, though it does that job rather well. Salt has a natural ability to kill bacteria and organisms when it comes in contact with them. The small quantity of salt used in conjunction with the yeast in these bread recipes is designed to help regulate how quickly the bread will rise as well as how outstanding the bread will taste. If you need low-sodium bread, you may use a natural sea salt or potassium chloride in place of the regular salt. The flavor will remain the same, and you should still have a fairly well-regulated fermentation time.

## SHORTENING

Any fat that I use will shorten the connection of the proteins in the dough. The addition of fat to dough is generally for two purposes: First, for added tenderness to the finished product you bake. The fat will help the dough remain moist even a few days after baking. Second, fat will help to condition the proteins in the dough, adding to the elasticity of the loaf. Fat is not always necessary in the base loaves, but will be necessary for the decorative embellishment dough on top of your loaves.



# GENERAL BREAD TIPS

## GLUTEN FORMATION

**G**luten is the naturally occurring protein in all wheat flours. Soft wheat will produce a cake or low-protein flour. Hard wheat will produce a high-protein or bread flour. If you are not milling your own flour, look for high-protein flour to make your bread. The connection of the gluten proteins in your bread will be a pivotal part of great structure in your loaf. When wheat protein comes in contact with liquid, the proteins will connect in a sponge-like structure. Kneading bread will generally connect the gluten strands in such a way that the bread will look and taste wonderful.

## TEMPERATURES

In all recipes that use yeast, be particularly aware of how hot the liquid is when adding it to the dry ingredients. Yeast should not come in contact with liquid that is much hotter than 110 degrees. As a general rule, I keep my liquid at body temperature or lower. Also, I generally allow my dough to ferment at temperatures between 85 and 90 degrees. This median temperature ensures a good flavor in the bread. Higher-temperature fermentation can cause the dough to taste overly yeasty or become sour.

Baking temperatures refer to a preheated oven. If you do not preheat your oven, the yeast will not be killed soon enough in the baking process. This usually results in dough bulging out of the side structure of your loaves, which will have adverse aesthetic appeal. The bread will still be fine to eat, but it will not look as beautiful as you would expect.

Cool loaves on a rack before storing them or wrapping them with plastic. This will prevent the loaves from coming in contact with condensation inside the wrapping, which would cause the bread to become soggy.

## FLAVOR

The flavor of perfect bread is distinct. One should experience the taste of the nutty fresh wheat if whole grain loaves are made. That milder taste should be well pronounced and not accentuated with anything too salty, bitter, sour, or yeasty. When you taste good bread, you should be impressed immediately by the depth of the flavor of the grain. The only exception to this would be the addition of herbs, nuts, fruit, or spices. Even then, flavor additions should bring harmonious notes to your loaf, not an overpowering dominion of taste. Keep this in mind and you will find that your loaves are well received by everyone who has the chance to break through your fresh-baked crust.

## MEASURING TOOLS

Professional bakers use scales and weights for their breadmaking. Every ingredient is carefully put on the scale and measured. I refer to the use of a scale only a few times in this book because it can sometimes be intimidating to a novice baker. Instead, I have geared these recipes toward the home baker. If the use of a scale is needed, I will specify.

Remember when measuring flour to lightly scoop the flour into a kitchen measuring cup intended for dry measurements. A coffee cup isn't a

measuring cup. You need to invest in standard measuring cups.

For liquid measurements, use a graduated measuring cup (they are usually glass with a small spout on one side). These are made for accuracy in reading liquid measurements.

Pay close attention to the amount of yeast to use and always flatten the top of the ingredients in the measuring spoon. Using a rounded measurement is not accurate.

In most cases, I raise my bread in a flat-sided crock or food-grade bucket. These make measuring when the dough has doubled easier, which will ensure proper development and structure in the bread.

I will ask you only a few times to weigh the dough when making a loaf or roll. Though this method is preferred in bake shops, it isn't always necessary when working in smaller numbers at home. Again, this book was written for home bakers.

# YEAST ADJUSTMENT SCHEDULE

**D**o you want to make bread fit into your busy schedule? The following is a tool (one of my favorite things ever) that will help you gauge the amount of yeast to add to dough to adjust the time in which it will be ready to bake. All measurements are as accurate as I could make them. Please be advised it may take a few tries to get the exact amount you want for your life. This will be applied directly to my Basic Whole Wheat Bread recipe (p. 28). It can be adjusted for the five-day bread dough as well (p. 21)—just double the amount of active dry yeast (since that recipe makes about double the amount of bread as the basic bread recipe). Be very accurate in your yeast measurements and don't use the quick-rise yeast (unless the recipe specifies to do so). Never skimp on the fermentation process. You'll find that the longer and slower the bread rises, the more beautiful and full of depth the flavor of your bread. Let bread fit in *your* schedule. It should be a part of life that you can control.

## BREAD SCHEDULE ADJUSTMENT FOR YEAST QUANTITY AND TEMPERATURE

In these adjustments, temperature is the most critical variable! If you can keep your dough within five degrees of what you intended, you can time it very closely to be ready when you want.

If you use your fridge for the rise, warm the dough to room temperature before baking.

Also, seal the container and flatten the dough as much as you can so the temperature is even. Dough kneaded by machine (in slow, long rises) needs cooler liquid added to the dough during mixing instead of warm liquid. The friction of the mixer will already add warmth to the dough.

Unless you live in a cold climate, I don't recommend using the oven as a tool for proofing (raising) your bread—controlling the temperature in most standard ovens is difficult. Unless you have a digital oven that lets you program the exact temperature in your oven, don't put bread in the oven until it is ready to bake.

Invest in a chef-style meat thermometer with a metal stick. They are only a few dollars but make a big difference in your baking experience. A meat thermometer is where the science comes into breadmaking. You'll be able to see the exact internal temperature of your dough. I also use a meat thermometer when I start working with the decorative dough embellishments.

After the first rise (especially with dough raised under refrigeration), dough should be warmed to room temperature. Check the temperatures!

I have factored into the time needed the fact that mixing by hand will take ten to fifteen minutes.

Baking is constant for all doughs, except for the sweet variations. For a standard-sized sandwich loaf: 425°F for 15 minutes, then lower the oven temperature to 350°F for 30–40 minutes

## YEAST ADJUSTMENT SCHEDULE

DOUGH TYPE	ACTIVE DRY YEAST	DOUGH TEMPERATURE	FIRST RISE	SHAPE/PROOF
FAST RISE	4 tsp.	80–90°F	1 h. 30 min.	45 min.
NORMAL RISE	2 tsp.	70–80°F	2 h. 15 min.	1 h.
LONG NORMAL RISE	2 tsp.	65–70°F	4 h. 30 min.	1 h. 30 min.
12-HOUR RISE	½ tsp.	70°F	8–10 h.	3–4 h.
16-HOUR RISE	½ tsp.	55–60°F	8–10 h.	8 h. (2 h. at 90°F)
24-HOUR RISE	¼ tsp.	40–55°F	Deflate every 8 h.	2 h. 30 min. at 90°F



# SIMPLE BREAD RECIPES

*The base for any decorative loaf*

No-Knead Four-Ingredient Bread

No-Knead Four-Ingredient Wheat Bread

Overnight Happiness Bread

Mom's Five-Day Bread

Basic Sweet Bread

Basic White Bread

Basic Whole Wheat Bread

Irish Soda Bread

Oat Bread

Double Chocolate Bread

Chef Tess's Whole Grain, Chocolate, Honey,  
Amaranth Bread

Old-Fashioned Peasant's Rye Bread

Yeast-Raised Orange Gingerbread





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# NO-KNEAD FOUR-INGREDIENT BREAD

1 standard-sized loaf or 12 medium-sized dinner rolls

*This basic bread doesn't require any kneading or special bread-baking experience. It makes a single loaf. Remember to measure your ingredients exactly. I don't use a scale to measure the weight of the ingredients in this recipe. Remember not to pack the flour into the measuring cups; instead, lightly fill the cups with flour and level off the measuring cup using the flat side of a knife. This will ensure that the recipe turns out well. I use instant SAF yeast. This yeast is 30 percent stronger than regular active yeast. It can be found in the baking aisle of most grocery stores, labeled bread machine yeast. If the amount of yeast in this recipe seems low, keep in mind that it has a long, slow rise and fermentation. This longer time will allow the dough to basically knead itself and for the yeast to change the structure of the proteins in the dough. Adding more yeast than the recipe calls for will not give you a better loaf of bread. In fact, using more yeast in this case will make the bread taste overly yeasty.*

3½ cups unbleached bread flour

2 tsp. salt

¼ tsp. instant SAF yeast (or ½ tsp. active dry yeast)

1¼–1½ cups water (under 110°F)

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Combine the ingredients in a 1-gallon food-grade bucket (or a 1-gallon bowl with a lid) until everything is mixed and smooth. Combining everything takes 20–30 turns by hand. You may need more water, depending on how dry your flour is and the conditions of flour storage.
2. Cover with a lid and keep covered at room temperature until you're ready to bake bread, 10–12 hours.

### *BAKING A LOAF:*

Form dough into a loaf and place on a lightly oiled baking stone or in a greased 8-inch loaf pan. Allow to rise in a warm room until doubled, about 2 hours. Bake at 375°F for 35–40 minutes (meat thermometer will register 165°F or more). Enjoy!

### *BAKING DINNER ROLLS:*

Divide dough into 12 rolls and form according to the roll-molding tips on [page 68](#). Place on a lightly greased baking sheet, 2 inches apart, and allow to rise until doubled, 2–2½ hours. Lightly mist with water and bake in a preheated 425-degree oven for 20–25 minutes.

### *CHEF'S NOTES:*

*A few factors can have an effect on the lightness of this bread:*

- **TEMPERATURE:** *Raising the bread during the winter months will take up to 1 hour longer for the second rise in the pan. I keep it around 70 degrees in the house during the winter. A good 10 degrees colder inside will make a difference in how fast the bread rises ... exponentially. In winter, a good solution is to turn on the oven to "warm." Place the dough loaf (ready to bake) in the oven, covering it with a heavy mist of water. Turn off the oven.*

*It should rise in an oven at 100 degrees or less. Once the loaf has risen, pull it out of the oven. Preheat the oven to 375°F and then proceed to bake.*

- **LOAF FORMATION:** *The loaf-molding technique (p. 67) is a factor in how well the loaf will rise because it is optimal for trapping the air produced by the yeast. The more air that is trapped inside the loaf, the lighter the final loaf will be. See the section in this book on loaf molding for details.*

- **FRESHNESS OF THE YEAST AND TYPE OF YEAST:**

*Checking the freshness of the yeast is always a good idea. If you are using the regular active dry yeast, ½ teaspoon is the correct measurement, but if the yeast is older, you will need more (up to 1 teaspoon). If there is still a problem (like during the winter months), you may add up to ¼ cup sugar or honey to the recipe to help activate the yeast.*

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## NO-KNEAD FOUR-INGREDIENT WHEAT BREAD

1 loaf or 12 medium-sized dinner rolls

*You will notice only a few changes in this recipe from the recipe for the white no-knead bread (p. 13). There is more moisture in the whole wheat recipe. Whole grain will always need more moisture because it contains the fiber and all the parts of the grain. The additional moisture will give your bread a better texture as well as a better shelf life. Whenever possible, use the higher-protein flour made from hard white or hard red wheat. My personal preference is Kamut flour. Kamut flour is made from a grain known as the durum wheat of the ancient Egyptians. It makes exceptional bread and is always organic and non-genetically modified. I grind my own flour, but you can use some that is pre-ground. If you live in a particularly dry environment, you may need to adjust the*

*water and add the full amount listed in the recipe. The dough should be soft and supple.*

4 cups hard wheat flour (mill your own or use Kamut flour)

1½ tsp. salt

¼ tsp. instant yeast (or ½ tsp. active dry yeast)

2–2½ cups water (under 110°F)

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Combine ingredients in a 1-gallon food-grade bucket (or a 1-gallon bowl with a lid) until everything is mixed and smooth. Combining everything takes 20–30 turns by hand.
2. Cover with a lid and keep covered at room temperature until you're ready to bake bread, 10–12 hours.

### ***BAKING A LOAF:***

Form dough into a loaf and place on a lightly oiled baking stone or in a greased 8-inch loaf pan. Allow to rise in a warm room until doubled, about 2 hours. Bake at 375°F for 35–40 minutes (meat thermometer will register 165°F or more). Enjoy!

### ***BAKING DINNER ROLLS:***

Divide dough into 12 rolls and form according to the roll-molding tips on [page 68](#). Place on a lightly greased baking sheet, 2 inches apart, and allow to raise until doubled, 2–2½ hours. Lightly mist with water and bake in a preheated 425-degree oven for 20–25 minutes.

**CHEF'S NOTE:**

*See Chef's Notes on [page 14](#) for troubleshooting specifics.*

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