

master dough for sandwich loaf

RECIPE COURTESY OF BRYAN FORD

INGREDIENTS:

Levain

- 50 grams mature sourdough starter
- 100 grams all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 75 grams warm water

Dough

- 415 grams bread flour
- 85 grams whole wheat flour
- 300 grams water
- 1 gram (about 1/4 teaspoon) instant dry yeast
- 15 grams kosher salt
- Vegetable oil, for the bowl

ACTIVE TIME:

30 minutes

TOTAL TIME:

14 hours (includes proofing times)

EASE OF PREPARATION:

Intermediate

YIELD:

2 loaves

INSTRUCTIONS

Levain

1. Mix the starter, all-purpose flour, and warm water in a medium bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and let this sit at room temperature for 3 to 4 hours. You'll know it's ready to use, not just because of the volume increase, but because when you pull at it you can see a web-like structure has developed. This is my cue to start mixing.

Dough

1. Add the bread and whole wheat flours, water, yeast, salt, and the levain to a large bowl. Use your hands to combine all the ingredients together. Start in the middle and work out towards the sides, combining everything slowly and thoroughly. Once there is no dry flour left, turn out the dough onto a lightly floured work surface. (I like to clean and dry my hands before I start kneading.) Knead, using your fingers to fold and your palms to press the dough, rotating it so that every side is equally kneaded. Knead until you have a strong, smooth dough that springs back to the touch, 2 to 3 minutes.
2. Transfer the dough to an oiled medium bowl, turning the dough in the oil to coat it. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap or a clean kitchen towel and let it sit at room temperature until the dough has almost doubled in size and has a nice smooth surface with a few bubbles, about 2 hours.
3. When you are ready to shape your loaves, lightly grease two 9-by-5-by-3-inch loaf pans with vegetable oil or flour 2 round proofing baskets to make boules (see Cook's Note) -- or use one of each, as here.
4. Turn out your dough onto a very lightly floured work surface. Divide the dough in half. Working with half of the dough, stretch the dough to fold it over itself, rotating it a few times, until it is smooth on one side (shaping into a cylinder for a loaf or a round ball for a boule). With the seam-side of the dough firmly on your surface, gently pull the ball toward you, creating tension in the dough and smoothness on the bottom and top. Transfer the doughs to their prepared proofing vessels. (I like to proof them seam-side down if I want a natural craggy top, or seam-side up if I want a smoother top, or to score the top). Proof in the loaf tin or round basket for about 30 minutes, then cover each with a plastic bag and put into your fridge overnight (8 to 12 hours).
5. The next day, preheat a 3-quart cast-iron Dutch oven or cast-iron fryer with skillet lid (if using) in the oven at 500°F for 45 minutes. Invert the dough out of the tin or basket onto parchment, then transfer the parchment into the hot pot. Add the loaf tin directly to the oven (no need to preheat the pan).
6. Lower your oven to 450°F. If making the boule, bake for 20 minutes in the cast-iron pot. Remove the lid to let the steam out and then transfer your boule out of the pot to the top rack for another 20 minutes. Bake the loaf in the loaf tin until it is a deep golden brown, 25 to 30 minutes, then remove it from the tin and bake it on the top rack for another 5 to 10 minutes. I like to bake dark, so sometimes I go a little extra.

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7. Let your loaves cool completely before slicing.

COOK'S NOTE: *If you do not have a proofing basket, you can use a bowl -- just drape the bowl with a clean kitchen towel and sprinkle it with flour, then add your dough and cover as you would a basket.*