



www.ethnicvegan.com

Artisan Bread

Love the flavor and texture of artisan loaves from the bakery but tired of paying sky-high prices? Make your own for a fraction of the cost! Yes, baking your own bread can be time-consuming, but it's also very satisfying. And once you taste that warm, crunchy crust fresh from your oven, you may never go back to store-bought breads.

Here's a basic recipe to get you started. No kneading is required. Feel free to experiment with some variations: Try topping with coarse salt, sprinkling some dried herbs into the dough, or adding some special ingredients like sun-dried tomatoes, finely chopped olives, or sprigs of fresh rosemary.

1 1/2 cups warm water
1 packet yeast (~ 2 1/4 tsp.)
1 tsp. sugar
3 1/4 cups organic, all-purpose unbleached flour (if using whole wheat or bread flour, increase the amount of water by 1/4 cup) plus a bit more for dusting
3/4 Tbs. coarse kosher or sea salt
Olive oil

1. Mix 1/4 cup of the warm water with the yeast and sugar. Let stand for about 8 minutes until yeast is foamy.
2. Add remaining warm water. Mix flour and salt in until well incorporated (try adding the flour 1 cup at a time). Dough will be "wet" or rather sticky. Place dough in lightly oiled bowl, cover with a damp dish towel, and let rise for 2 hours in a warm, draft-free area. (If our house is cool and drafty on baking day, we place the bowl inside the oven on its lowest setting with the door propped open a bit.) Note that the dough may be hard to work at this stage.
3. After the dough rises, place it on a tabletop lightly dusted with flour. Divide dough into two small rounds* if desired, or just make one loaf. Add a little more flour if the dough is sticky and hard to work. Sprinkle flour on top of dough, and tuck sides under to create desired loaf shape(s). Place dough on a lightly oiled cookie sheet. Allow it to rest for approximately 40 minutes.
4. Preheat oven to 450°. For best results, add 3/4 to 1 cup boiling water to a broiler tray on the bottom rack. This creates steam in the oven and improves the texture of your loaf. (As a precaution, cover your oven window with a dish towel while adding the water container, and be very careful to avoid splashing water on the window to prevent cracking it.)
5. Bake for approximately 40 minutes or until golden brown. Oven times and temperatures vary, but with practice, you'll be able to produce a picture-perfect loaf every time.

**A small round loaf of artisan bread is sometimes called a "boule" (from the French word for ball).*