



# EASY ARTISAN BREAD

## Ingredients:

3 cups water (no more than 100 degrees)

1.5 Tbsp coarse salt

1.5 Tbsp or 2 packets of yeast (any variety is fine)

6 1/2 cups unbleached flour

(optional: for herb bread, add 1 tsp dried thyme and 1/2 tsp dried rosemary. Double amounts if using fresh herbs)

## Instructions:

Warm the water (optional). Lukewarm water will produce a rise in 2 hours. You can use cold water but it may take up to 4 hours. Add yeast and salt to the water in a 5 quart container.

Add all of the flour at once. Use the scoop and sweep method and don't be tempted to use a 2 cup measuring cup, since it can compact the flour. Mix with a wooden spoon or a mixer with dough hook until everything is uniformly moist without dry patches. If it's too difficult to stir by spoon you can finish with your hand but kneading is not needed.

Cover with a lid (not airtight) that fits your container well. Allow to rise until it begins to collapse. Letting it go longer, for up to 5 hours, will not harm the result. Use some right away or put it in the refrigerator for 3 hours before shaping a loaf. This dough makes several loaves and can stay good in the refrigerator for a couple of weeks.

When ready to bake, prepare your shaping surface with cornmeal or flour. Sprinkle the surface of the dough with flour, then pull up and cut off a grapefruit sized portion (about 1 pound). Use enough flour so that the dough doesn't stick to your hands. Stretch the surface of the dough around to the bottom, rotating to get all sides. Rest the loaf and let it rise about 40 minutes, uncovered. (Alternatively, you can make a baguette and roll the ball into a tube shape and let it rise for 20 minutes.)

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Place a broiler tray full of water in the bottom of the oven.

Dust the loaf with flour and slash about 1/4 inch deep in a scallop pattern. (For baguette, brush on a little water and slash with angled lines.)

Bake about 30 minutes (25 minutes for Baguette), until the crust is nicely browned and firm to touch. Allow to cool completely. (Or use a quality bread knife if you love to eat it warm)

When you have finished the dough, making another batch without washing the container will give you a little head start on sourdough.