



Ballymaloe brown: Molasses and wheat flour brown up this loaf of bread nicely.

Bread baking made simple with these tips to check yeast

BY DANA JACOBI
SPECIAL WRITER

There was a time when I would confidently make a three-layer devil's food cake from scratch, complete with marshmallow frosting but would hesitate at baking a simple loaf of bread. The cake tasted great even when it was not picture perfect. My bread-baking results, on the other hand, were sometimes inedible, adding insult to injury after hours of diligent work.

To master my fear of working with yeast, I selected a recipe for a loaf I liked enough to eat every day. I've now made this recipe often enough to promise that it will let you conquer bread-baking without fear of failing.

Equally important, it takes little time to make. This is a batter bread, which doesn't require kneading. Instead, it is vigorously stirred then turned directly into the baking pan. This eliminates guessing about whether it is properly kneaded as well as the mess of a doughy board and flour strewn about. This loaf rises just once, so it takes about the same amount of time as your favorite zucchini or banana bread.

The recipe is adapted from Myrtle Allen's *Cooking in Ballymaloe House*, a cookbook from one of Ireland's great restaurants. This light and pleasant whole-grain loaf is delightful toasted, for sandwiches or to accompany soups and salads. It conquers any prejudice about whole wheat bread.

For success, always follow two suggestions. First, measure the yeast, which avoids the problem of active dry yeast packets whose weight can vary as much as 20 percent. Second, go by visual cues during proofing (a test to ensure yeast is alive, "proven" if it swells and bubbles when steeped in a warm liquid) and the rising period. Set a timer for less than the recipe calls for and check how the yeast mixture, or the loaf, looks. This reduces the risk of the yeast losing power from sitting too long in a warm kitchen after it dissolves or the loaf collapsing during baking, as it does if it over-rises before going into the oven.

BALLYMALOE BROWN BREAD

- 1 teaspoon butter
- 3 1/3 cups (14 ounces) whole wheat flour, preferably stone-ground

- 1/2 cup (2 ounces) unbleached white bread flour
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 tablespoon unsulphured molasses
- 2 cups lukewarm water (100-115 degrees)
- 2 tablespoons dry active yeast (about 2 1/2 packages)

Use butter to generously grease light-colored 9-by-5-by-3-inch bread pan. Set pan aside. Set rack in center of oven.

In large bowl, combine whole wheat and white flour with salt. To warm flour and bowl, set in gas oven with pilot light or electric oven on lowest possible setting.

In small bowl, mix molasses into 1/2 cup of water. Sprinkle yeast over liquid. Set aside until yeast is dissolved and foamy, about 5 minutes.

Remove warmed bowl of flour from oven. Preheat oven to 450°F.

Using wooden spoon, mix yeast and remaining 1 1/2 cups water into flour until sticky dough forms. Mixture will seem dry at first but gets wetter as stirred. It will partially pull away from sides of bowl but remain sticky and too soft to knead. Turn dough into prepared baking pan.

Cover pan with dish towel. Set in warm, draft-free place until dough doubles in volume, 20 to 15 minutes, and is slightly below edge of pan.

Bake 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 425°F. Bake 20 minutes, or until loaf sounds hollow when tapped in center of top and bottom of pan.

Crust will be dark brown and hard. If loaf is very dark but still moist in center, turn off oven. Remove bread from pan and let it sit in oven 5 minutes.

Remove and let cool completely on rack before slicing.

Makes one 9-inch loaf, or about 18 slices.

Nutritional Information per slice: 95 calories, 1 g. fat (less than 1 g. saturated fat), 20 g. carbohydrate, 4 g. protein, 3 g. dietary fiber, 260 mg. sodium.

Dana Jacobi, author of *The Joy of Soy*, writes for the American Institute for Cancer Research.

Go ahead and cool off with iced tea

Recipes courtesy of Diane Reynolds. See related column on Taste front.

CITRUS SPICE TEA

- 1 cup R.W. Knudsen Lemon Ginger Echinacea Simply Nutritious Juice
- 1 cup R.W. Knudsen Inner Strength Simply Nutritious Juice
- 4 Yogi Green Tea Bags (Super Anti-Oxidant)
- 2 cups water
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 2-inch stick of cinnamon
- 4 orange slices for garnish

Combine all ingredients except tea bags in a 2-quart saucepan and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and add the tea bags. Cover and let steep at least 15 minutes.

Remove tea bags and serve hot or chilled over ice. Garnish with an orange slice. Promptly refrigerate any leftover tea and use within 24 hours for best quality. Serves 4.

ICED TEA FOR YOU & ME

- 1 Upton Cold Brew Blend Iced Tea Bag
- 8 ounces cool water
- 8 ounces 100 percent cranberry juice or cranberry juice blend

- 2 lemon slices
- Ice

Place water and tea bag in a quart pitcher and steep for 10 minutes, dunking the bag periodically. Remove tea bag and add cranberry juice or juice blend. Mix with a spoon. Pour equal amounts into 2 tall glasses filled with ice. Add a lemon slice to each and enjoy! Serves 2.

PARTY TIME TEA

- 5 tablespoons loose black or oolong tea
- 1 quart boiling water
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2-cup fresh mint sprigs
- 2 (12-ounce) cans frozen lemonade concentrate
- 2 (12-ounce) cans frozen orange juice concentrate
- 1 lemon, 1 lime and 1 orange - thin slice all 3 for garnish

In a covered pot, steep tea in boiling water for 15 minutes. Strain and mix in sugar while tea is still hot. Add mint leaves. Prepare lemonade and orange juice according to can dilution directions. Mix both into tea. Refrigerate until serving time. Serve in a festive punch bowl with ice and plenty of lemon, lime and orange slices floating on top. Serves 24.

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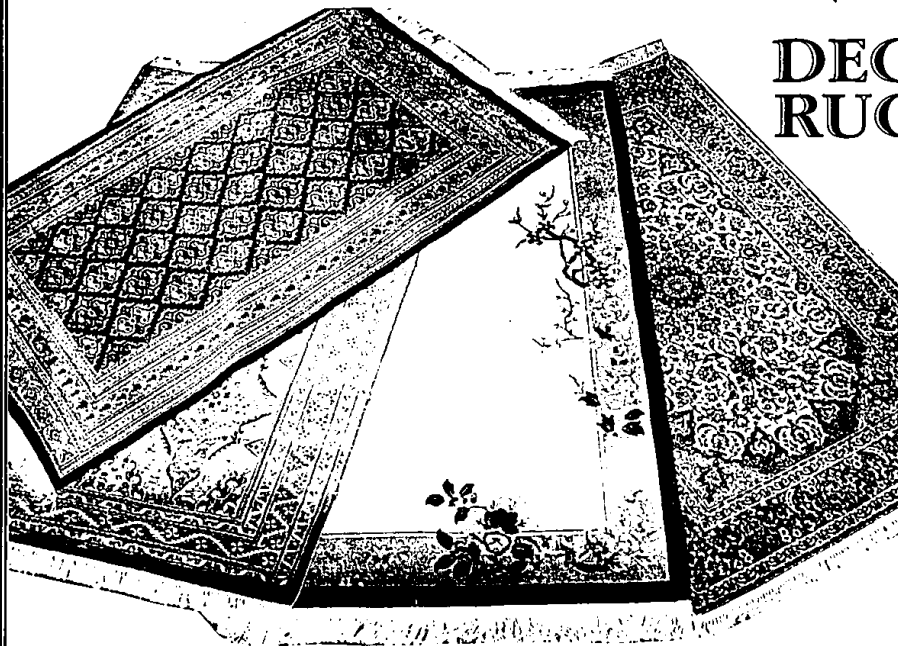
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