

ALL'S WELL BREAD

From the Kitchen of: Phil Zaret, Community Member

Preparation Time: 1 hour 35 minutes | **Cook Time:** 55 minutes | **Yield:** One loaf, ~20 slices

Common Allergens: Wheat

"This is a recipe for an almost failure-proof, high-quality, homemade, standard sized loaf of bread," says Phil. "Making bread is a series of many hurdles, any one of which can spell failure. That's why, if you follow this method scrupulously, you will become the 'perfect' bread baker."

Phil developed this recipe over the course of their 50-year bread baking tenure. "I began baking bread over 50 years ago, when the choice of breads in Ann Arbor was very limited. This situation has improved greatly over the years, but I still like my own bread best because I know what's in it and I can make it exactly to my tastes. Friends and relations are especially partial to my bread, which is very satisfying to me, the home baker," Phil recounts.

Phil says that this recipe for a "perfect" bread recipe has helped reduce baking-related waste. Because the loaf is "fail-proof," Phil never has to toss an inedible, failed homemade loaf.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT:

- Food processor
- Pullman 4 x 4 x 9-inch bread pan
- Large tall-sided pan (such as a lasagna pan)



INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 packet (2 1/4 ounces) instant yeast
- 1 Tablespoon oil
- 1 1/4 cups (10 ounces) warm water
- 2 -2 1/2 cups bread flour

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Into the bowl of a food processor with a dough blade, add the whole wheat flour, salt, sugar, and yeast. Process for several seconds. Next, add the oil and process again. Add the water and process again.
- Add 2 cups of bread flour to the processor, and mix using the processor's "dough" button. The processor will stall if the mixture is too thick. If it stalls, stop. Add another $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of bread flour. Process until a dough ball starts circling the bowl. If it still stalls, add more flour one tablespoon at a time until the dough ball forms. Once the dough ball forms, stop the processor and dump the dough ball onto a flat surface.
- Knead the dough by hand. If the dough is super sticky and clingy, add a little more flour. If the dough is only slightly sticky, do not add flour. Slightly sticky dough will rise nicely and give a fine texture to the loaf.

- Knead by “turns,” 10 to 15 times at most. First, fold the mess of dough in on itself until it forms a single neat mass. Flatten the dough, pushing down with fingers and/or the heel of your hands. Fold the dough over on itself and turn it a quarter turn. Flatten. Repeat the process until the dough is resistant but springy.
- Roll the dough out with your hands into a fat, flat, football shape the length of your bread pan. If there is a seam, have it at the bottom.
- Spray a Pullman 4 x 4 x 9-inch bread pan with oil. Press the “football” of dough firmly into the pan, trying to squeeze it into the four corners. Keep going until it looks neat, flat, and uniform.
- Spray the top of the loaf lightly with oil. Cover tightly with plastic wrap. Place the loaf pan in a large, tall-sided pan. A lasagna pan is perfect.
- Meanwhile, fill a tea kettle or medium-sized sauce pan with water and bring it to a boil on the stove.
- Fill the lasagna pan with about one inch of hot water from the tap. When the water on the stove comes to a boil, pour it into the lasagna pan. Lay a cookie sheet over the bread and lasagna pans to hold in heat. Check the loaf in a half hour to an hour, to see how it has risen. The dough should push up on the plastic wrap if it’s risen properly.
- When the loaf has risen to push on the plastic wrap, remove the plastic wrap and transfer the loaf pan to two or three cookie sheets stacked on top of each other to prevent the bottom of your loaf pan from burning or sticking, and to make for even baking.
- With the back of your hand, slap the top of the dough loaf once or twice, until it deflates. Don’t worry, it will rise again. If you do not slap it down, it will rise too high and collapse in the oven.
- Put the loaf on its cookie sheets on the middle rack of your cold oven. Do not preheat.
- Set the oven temperature at 350° F, and set a timer for 55 minutes.
- When the loaf is done, dump it onto a cooling rack. Set it upright and let it cool for 3 full hours before slicing.

HOW TO STORE BREAD:

Fresh bread is best within a day or two of baking.

If you want to keep a loaf around for longer, try **slicing it**, then wrapping it tightly in plastic wrap and again in foil or freezer paper. Freeze.

Defrost the bread at room temperature in the wrapping, then remove the wrapping and warm it in a 300° F oven for 10 minutes, until the crust is crisp.

HOW TO REVIVE STALE BREAD:

For bread that is slightly dried out, try flicking a few drops of water on the crust, wrapping it in foil, then heating the bread in a 300° F oven for 5-10 minutes. If your bread is hard, soak the bread in cold water, then proceed with wrapping and warming.

You should NEVER eat moldy bread. Even just a speck of mold is a sign of spoilage.