

Rye Bread - Mild

adapted from "Amish Rye Bread" *Great German-American Feasts* by Cortner and Garmey

Proof yeast (to make sure it is still active):

¼ cup warm water (105° - 115°)
2¼ teaspoons (1 package) active dry yeast
2 teaspoons sugar

Put water in bowl of electric mixer. (If bowl is cold, use hotter water so that resulting water is 105° - 115°.) Add yeast and sugar, then wait 5 minutes to allow yeast mixture to get bubbly.

Starter/Sponge:

1½ cup rye flour
2 teaspoons olive oil
4 cups warm water (105° - 115°)

Fluff or sift rye flour before measuring. Using the paddle attachment, on low speed, add oil and water to yeast, then add rye flour in ½ cup increments. Mixture will have the consistency of pancake batter and will be slightly bubbly. Allow the sponge to rise for about 90 minutes in a warm place (80° - 85°) or 2 hours at room temperature. It will look very bubbly when it is ready.

Dough:

~4 cups all purpose flour
2 teaspoons salt
1 tablespoon melted butter

Return bowl with sponge to mixer. Fluff or sift flour before measuring. On low speed, using the paddle attachment, add approximately 2 cups flour in ½ cup increments. Allow each addition of flour to become well incorporated before adding the next batch of flour.

Switch to the dough hook. Add salt to the third cup of flour, mix well, then add gradually to the dough so that the salt and flour mixture is well distributed. (Do not add salt earlier, because salt will reduce the effectiveness of the yeast and the gluten production.) Add as much of the 4th cup of flour as is needed to form a dough that is firm, but soft enough that the mixer can continue to knead dough without over-working the mixer. Reserve any remaining flour. Increase mixer speed to a slow to medium speed (e.g., 3 out of 10 on the speed setting), and machine knead the dough for 5 or 6 minutes. Check mixer periodically to make sure it is not over-heating.

Turn out the dough onto a lightly floured pastry board. If dough is sticky, knead by hand and add the reserved flour, plus up to an additional ½ cup all purpose flour until dough is no longer sticky. Divide the dough and form 2 loaves. Place each in a greased loaf pan measuring approximately 8½" x 4½" x 2½". Using butter to grease the pan will give the bread a better taste and help turn the sides and bottom a golden brown.

Set loaves in warm place and allow to rise until doubled in bulk (approximately one hour).

Pre-heat oven for 10 - 15 minutes to 375°. Before placing in oven, slash top of each loaf about ½" deep with a very sharp knife. Then gently brush or mop top of each loaf with melted butter. A silicone brush works best for this (a stiffer brush may deflate the bread). Bake for approximately 40 minutes, until golden brown and loaf sounds hollow when tapped.