

# Country Bread

*This recipe was adapted from Flour cookbook by Joanne Chang*

*Makes two 8-inch round loaves*

## Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups (360 grams) water at body temperature  
*{it should feel neither cold nor hot}*
- 2 cups (280 grams) unbleached all-purpose flour,  
plus 2 tablespoons for sprinkling the loaves before baking
- 2 cups (300 grams) bread flour
- 12 ounces (340 grams) bread sponge *{see recipe below}*
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- Pinch active dry yeast
- Medium-course yellow Cornmeal for the baking sheet



## Instructions

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fixed with the dough hook, mix together the water, 2 cups of all-purpose flour, and the 2 cups of bread flour on low speed for about a minute, or until you have a shaggy, stiff dough. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let sit for 10 minutes.
2. Remove the plastic wrap and add the sponge, a pinch of yeast, salt, and sugar and mix on medium-low speed for 4-6 minutes or until they are incorporated into the dough. The dough should be somewhat sticky but still smooth and feel like an earlobe when you grasp a bit between your fingers. If the dough is stiffer than this, mix in a few tablespoons water; if it is too loose, mix in a few tablespoons all-purpose flour. You may need to stop the mixer a few times to pull off any dough that has gathered around the hook or on the sides of the bowl.
3. Transfer the dough to a lightly oiled bowl, and turn the dough to coat it. Lightly cover the bowl with plastic wrap or a lint-free damp cloth. Place the bowl in a draft-free, warm place for 2-3 hours. The dough will rise a little bit and it will feel a little loose and relaxed and somewhat sticky.
4. Flour your hands and work surface and turn the dough out of the bowl. Divide the dough in half using a knife or bench scraper. Shape each half into a ball by tucking the edges of the dough underneath itself, continuing to tuck until it naturally gathers into a ball with a nice taut surface. *{At this point, you can cover the shaped loaves and store them in the refrigerator overnight. Remove them the next day and proceed as directed}*
5. Sprinkle the cornmeal on two baking sheets and place one loaf on each baking sheet. Cover them loosely but completely with lightly oiled pieces of plastic wrap and let them sit for another 2-3 hours. They won't rise too much, but they will seem softer and you may see some bubbles forming just under the surface of the dough.

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6. Position a rack in the center of the oven and another rack below it. Preheat the oven to 500°F.
7. Sprinkle the top of one loaf with about a tablespoon of flour, and slash a simple design on top with a very sharp knife or a razor blade. Place the baking sheet in the oven. Place a rimmed baking sheet or shallow pan filled with about 2 cups water on the oven rack below the bread. The steam from the water will create a nice moist atmosphere for your bread to grow. Bake for 25-30 minutes, or until the loaf is dark golden brown on top and makes a hollow sound when you thump it on the bottom. Transfer the baked loaf to wire racks.

Repeat step 7 to bake the second loaf of bread.

8. Let the loaves cool for at least 1 hour before serving. They can be stored in paper bags at room temperature for 2-3 days. You can also freeze this bread, well wrapped in plastic wrap for up to 2 weeks.

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## Bread Sponge

*Makes about 12 ounces, 340 grams*

### **Ingredients**

- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup (180 grams) water
- 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups (175 grams) unbleached all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon active dry yeast

### **Instructions**

1. In a medium bowl, stir together the water, 1 cup (140 grams) of the flour, and the yeast until well combined. Place in a covered container and leave at room temperature for at least 4 hours and up to 8 hours.
2. Stir in the remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (35 grams) of flour. The sponge will stiffen up with the addition of the flour into a very loose dough. Re-cover it and leave it in the fridge overnight.