

Jerry's Side-by-Side Wonder Bread Experiment!

Flour used: King Arthur's Unbleached Bread Flour

Ingredients: Unbleached hard spring wheat enriched flour, malted barley flour, niacin (a B vitamin), reduced iron, thiamin mononitrate (vitamin B1), riboflavin (vitamin B2), folic acid (a B vitamin).

The recipe I used is from the King Arthur Flour website. I made some slight modifications for the ingredient's to match what I had on hand and what I think would be available in period.

(I added some milk and removed the dry milk powder.)

<http://www.kingarthurflour.com/recipes/king-arthurs-classic-white-sandwich-bread-recipe>

King Arthur's Classic White Sandwich Bread

- Hands-on time: 15 mins. to 20 mins.
- Baking time: 35 mins. to 40 mins.
- Total time: 2 hrs 50 mins. to 4 hrs
- Yield: 1 large loaf
- Published: 01/28/2010

This signature white sandwich loaf, an updated version of King Arthur's popular Walter Sands Basic White Bread, is the "go-to" bread for breakfast toast, brown-bag PB & Js, or a grilled-cheese-and-soup supper for many of us here at King Arthur Flour. Just like King Arthur Flour itself, this bread is classic, reliable, and your best friend in the kitchen.

Ingredients

- 1 cup lukewarm water
- 1/2 cup lukewarm milk
- 1 heaping tablespoon honey
- 2 1/4 teaspoons instant yeast
- 1 3/4 teaspoons salt
- 2 tablespoons soft butter
- 4 cups King Arthur Unbleached All-Purpose Flour

Directions

- 1) Mix all of the ingredients in the order listed, and mix and knead — by hand, or using a stand mixer — to make a smooth dough. It won't be particularly soft nor stiff; it should be smooth and feel bouncy and elastic under your hands.
- 2) Place the dough in a lightly greased bowl or other container. Cover it, and let it rise at room temperature until it's very puffy, 1 to 2 hours.
- 3) Gently deflate the dough, and shape it into a fat 9" log. Place it in a lightly greased 9" x 5" loaf pan.
- 4) Cover the pan, and let the dough rise for 60 to 90 minutes, till it's crowned 1" to 1 1/2" over the rim of the pan. Towards the end of the rising time, preheat the oven to 350°F.
- 5) Bake the bread for 20 minutes. Tent it lightly with aluminum foil, and bake for an additional 15 to 20 minutes, till it's golden brown. An instant-read thermometer inserted into the center will read 195°F to 200°F.
- 6) Remove the bread from the oven, and turn it out onto a rack to cool. When completely cool, wrap in plastic, and store at room temperature.

Yield: 1 large loaf, about 18 servings.

This was an experiment in the difference between flour that had been roasted in an oven before use, compared to unroasted flour. I am NOT a cook so any glaring mistakes are all mine. Several wonderful people helped with suggestions before I started. You know who you are and I want to thank you all!

So here is my “wonder bread” experiment.

I started with a 6-inch flower pot (new, unused and well cleaned) and 5 cups of flour (FYI: A 6 inch flower pot will hold five cups of flour for roasting). What got me started was a post about a period recipe so that got me wondering (not the reason for the name). As the time frame "bake it as long as a pasty of venison" is a bit vague, I roasted it at 350 for 2 hours. Not being a great cook I decided to use a modern recipe for white bread as I know what that is supposed to taste like.

I started with five cups of flour roasted for 2 hours at 350 degrees and five cups of flour un-roasted.

Is 350 too low for roasting the flour? I chose that temperature as that is what the bread will be baked at. After an hour I tasted the flour and it seemed much drier but it did not seem any different in taste compared to the un-roasted flour.



After two hours it had a slightly yellow color and was starting to clump. I poured it into a pan and found the middle was more clumped than the outside near the terracotta.



After grinding and sifting, I found that I had slightly more volume in flour than before. (Due to the sifting?) And I had a small bit of clumps that resisted grinding any smaller. I think these would have ground down if I had used a mortar and pestle and not a flat bottomed dish and a steel measuring cup.



I mixed all of the ingredients side by side and then added 2 cups of flour to each pan.

The un-roasted flour quickly made a thin dough while the roasted flour soaked up all of the liquid and was very dry.



The third cup of flour in the un-roasted flour made the dough look like what you would expect bread dough to look like. The roasted flour after the third cup was completely dry and crumbled at a slight touch.

The fourth cup of flour in the un-roasted dish made a standard dough that I then put on the counter and kneaded for several minutes. I added a small bit of flour to keep it from sticking to my hands and the counter and then put into a small dish to rise.

The roasted dough was much different!

I had to add over a ½ cup of water just to get the flour to mix with the other ingredients. It was then so sticky that I had to add another ½ cup or so of flour when I was trying to knead it. It seemed to have very little elasticity like the un-roasted dough did. It reminded me more of the biscuit dough my mom would make when I was a kid. I kneaded it at least as long as the other set but it only slightly firmed up at all. I made a ball and put it into a bowl to rise next to the other loaf.

I was surprised that the roasted dough seemed to rise slightly more than the un-roasted flour but the top seemed very dry and cracked.



I kneaded the dough again put it into the bread pans. It seemed that the roasted dough rose slightly less than the un-roasted dough this time.



Baking was 20 minutes longer for the roasted flour and while the one loaf came out just like a normal loaf of bread, the roasted flour made a much denser loaf and as it did not rise all of the way, there was a piece right in the middle that looked raw when it was done baking.



I suspect, that instead of letting it rise in a bowl, punching down and putting into a pan, I should have let it rise once and cooked it on a hearthstone to draw out excess moisture? This is where experienced cooks would probably have better insights.

While being very tasty, I have to think the texture was more like cake than bread. It kinda reminded me of bread pudding. Dense but moist. The taste had a very slight nutty flavor but it was slight. Maybe from not a high enough roasting temperature, too short a roasting time or both? The crust was very thick and was tough also.

So in closing I think that I will be doing this again and also making the recipe that was the start of all of this. With some slight changes I think my "Wonder bread" will be a great hit!

I did find that when toasted and served with lots of butter and honey it was even more like bread pudding. A slice of this would probably make a good 'plate' for a historical dinner.

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