

Basic bread



Ingredients (makes 1 loaf)

500g strong white flour

40g butter

12g dried yeast

2tsp salt

1tsp sugar

2tbsp rapeseed oil

50ml milk

About 250ml warm water

Method

Preheat your oven to 220C or 200C full fan. If baking a loaf, lightly grease a loaf tin and dust with a little bread flour. If baking rolls, line a baking tray with baking parchment and dust with a little bread flour.

Place the flour, butter, yeast, salt and sugar into a mixing bowl and using a dough hook attachment beat on a low speed for around 10 minutes. This is an important stage so don't try speed it up as this starts working the gluten.

Add the oil and milk, continue to beat on a low speed until combined.

Slowly add the warm water until the dough starts to come together. You may not need all the water so it's important to add it slowly. And you may also find that you need to add a little more water later if the dough is too tight.

Continue to beat the dough on low speed for about another ten minutes until a clear dough is

formed. This essentially means a smooth dough with no lumps. You can also knead the dough by hand but it's much easier and quicker to do this with the mixer.

Leave the dough in the bowl, cover with a damp tea towel and leave in a warm part of your kitchen for an hour to prove. The dough should at least double in volume, maybe almost triple.

Return the dough to mixer, and again on a low speed, beat for another ten minutes. This is called knocking back.

Now your dough is ready to form into a loaf or roll into bread rolls.

For a loaf, knead the dough by hand a few times so that you are able to shape it to fit a loaf tin, and also try to get the seam running straight along the bottom. Aim for an even rectangular shape that doesn't touch the sides of the tin, as the dough will grow into that space. Dust the top with flour. Cover with the damp tea towel and prove again for another hour. Bake for around 35 – 40 minutes. It's important that the oven is preheated as the high temperature shocks the dough into rising. To check that bread is cooked, remove from the tin a tap the bottom – it should sound hollow. Leave to cool on a wire rack.

For bread rolls, roll the dough into a sausage about 2 inches thick, then slice into 1-inch chunks. Roll these chunks on a clean surface with your hand cupped over the top. It's best not to use any flour for this. Place on the lined baking tray. Cover with a damp tea towel and prove for an hour.

At this stage you can brush the tops of the rolls with a little egg yolk to give a shiny glaze once cooked. You can also add different toppings, some of my favourites are a scattering of oats, some chilli flakes, sesame seeds, or even a few flakes of sea salt and a grind of black peppercorns.

Bake for 8 – 10 minutes.