

Pumpernickel Trencher

Bread was a main part of the medieval diet. People didn't bake at home as it would require a large oven. Instead, they bought bread from professional bakers. Round, stale loaves of bread were cut into horizontal slices called "trenchers" to be used as plates. Simulate this with fresh bread instead. Follow the directions and bake a loaf of this dark rye bread for yourself.

INGREDIENTS

- 3¼ cups bread flour
- 1½ tsp salt
- 3 tbsp brown sugar
- 2 tbsp active dry yeast
- 1⅓ cups rye flour
- 4 tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 cups warm milk (110°F)
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- ½ cup cornmeal
- 4 tbsp molasses

INSTRUCTIONS

1 In a large bowl, mix together the bread flour, rye flour, cornmeal, cocoa, brown sugar and salt.

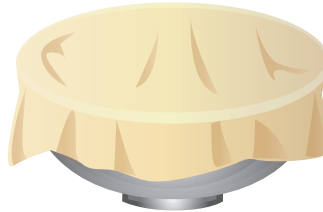
2 In a medium bowl, add the yeast, warm milk and molasses. Stir very gently until the yeast and molasses dissolve. Wait 4 minutes until you see bubbles.

3 Add the milk mixture and vegetable oil to the large bowl with the dry ingredients from Step 1. Mix well.

4 When the mixture thickens into a dough, dump it out onto a floured surface and knead by hand for 15 minutes.

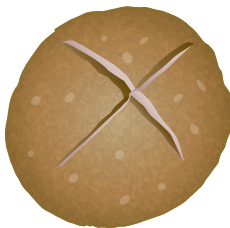


5 Place the dough back into the bowl and cover with a dish towel. Leave it to rise on the counter for 30 minutes.



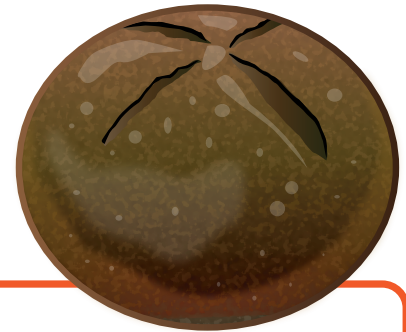
6 Uncover the bowl and gently punch down the dough. Remove it from the bowl and briefly knead it. Form it into a ball and set it on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Cover with a damp dish towel and leave it to rise for 1 hour.

7 Ask an adult to slice an X into the top of the loaf with a sharp knife.



8 Bake on the parchment-lined baking sheet in a 375°F oven for 40 minutes.

9 Cool the loaf and slice horizontally to make trenchers. Enjoy with a hearty stew.



Why does yeast make bread rise?

The scientific name for baker's yeast is *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, which means "sugar-eating fungus." After eating sugar, this microscopic fungus releases carbon dioxide gas and ethyl alcohol. Since bread dough is stretchy, the gas gets trapped inside, which causes the bread to rise and gives it a spongy texture after it is baked.