



THE WAY THE COOKIE CRUMBLES

A FOOD BLOG

Whole Wheat Country Crust Bread (adapted from Betty Crocker and Peter Reinhart's *Whole Grain Breads*)

Pre-dough:

1¾ cups (8 ounces) whole wheat flour
½ teaspoon salt
¾ cup water

1. Mix all of the soaker ingredients together in a bowl for about 1 minute, until all of the flour is hydrated and the ingredients form a ball of dough.
2. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and leave at room temperature for 12 to 24 hours. (If it will be more than 24 hours, place the soaker in the refrigerator; it will be good for up to 3 days. Remove it 2 hours before mixing the final dough to take off the chill.)

Dough:

1¾ cups (9½ ounces) unbleached flour
pre-dough
1 teaspoon table salt
¼ cup water, warm (110 degrees)
1 egg
2 tablespoons vegetable oil or unsalted butter, melted
¼ cup (1.75 ounces) granulated sugar
2 teaspoons instant yeast

1. Add the flour to mixer bowl fitted with hook attachment (or a large bowl if mixing by hand). Cut the pre-dough into about 12 pieces and add them to the flour, tossing the pieces to coat (to keep them from immediately sticking back together). Add the salt, water, egg, oil, sugar, and yeast to the mixer bowl and mix on medium-low until combined (or stir with a rubber spatula), then continue kneading until smooth and elastic, 6-8 minutes (8-10 minutes if by hand). The dough should be soft but not sticky; add flour if necessary.
2. Lightly oil a large bowl and transfer the dough to the bowl, rolling it to coat with the oil. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap or a damp towel. Let rise until doubled in size, about 1½ to 2 hours.
3. Form dough into loaf by gently pressing the dough into a rectangle, one inch thick and no wider than the length of the loaf pan. Next, roll the dough firmly into a cylinder, pressing with your fingers to make sure the dough sticks to itself. Turn the dough seam side up and pinch it closed. Finally, place dough in greased 9-by-5-by-3-inch loaf pan and press it gently so it touches all four sides of the pan.
4. Cover with plastic wrap or a damp towel; set aside in warm spot until dough almost doubles in size, about 45 minutes. Heat oven to 350 degrees.
5. Remove plastic wrap from loaf pan; place pan in oven. Bake until instant-read thermometer inserted at angle from short end just above pan rim into center of loaf reads 195 degrees, about 40 to 50 minutes. Remove bread from pan, transfer to a wire rack, and cool to room temperature. Slice and serve.