

Onboard bread recipes

Basic French Bread Recipe

(from *The James Beard Cookbook*, 1959)

1 package yeast
2 cups lukewarm water
2 Tbs. sugar
1 Tbs. salt
5-7 cups flour
(one egg white, if desired)

Dissolve the yeast in the lukewarm water in a large bowl. Add sugar and salt and dissolve them. Gradually add flour.

Turn out on a table and knead. Cover with the bowl and let it rest for 10 minutes. Knead.

Let it rise in the bowl for another 1-2 hours until it's double in bulk. Knead.

Form into two loaves (French-style long ones, round ones in an oven-proof bowl, regular pan loaves, etc.). Sprinkle the bottom of each container with cornmeal and place the bread on it. You don't need to grease these pans. Slash the tops of the bread and spread with an egg white, if desired. Let the bread rise another five minutes.

Place in a cold oven and turn it on to 400. It should cook in 35 minutes. (In reality, with our boat oven, we turn the temperature on about halfway, whatever that setting might be. Then when we think about it, we turn the temperature up all the way. We remove the bread when it looks done, but it probably takes longer than 35 minutes.)

Italian-type Bread

This is a quick and easy recipe. Good for pizza crust also.

1 cup tepid water
1 Tbs. instant yeast
1 tsp. sugar
1 tsp. salt
3-4 cups flour
2-3 Tbs. olive oil or vegetable oil

Dissolve yeast in water. Add sugar, salt. Stir in flour to form ball. Knead dough for a few minutes until smooth. Leave in bowl. Cover with towel and place in warm spot for about an hour.

Form into loaves. Let rise for 15 minutes. Bake about 30 min. at 350.

Boaters' Bread

Jim and Bobby Wooll shared this simple bread recipe for a cruisers' loaf:

1 cup white bread flour
2 Tbs. sugar
1 tsp. salt
1 packet regular yeast (not rapid rise)
1-2 Tbs. oil
1 cup water
1 cup wheat flour

Mix dry ingredients in a large bowl with a white spatula, reserving the wheat flour for later. Mix in water and oil stirring well. It should be the consistency of thick cream. Let it rest in a warm place until bubbles appear.

Add wheat flour and mix with the spatula until it balls. Some flour will be unmixed in the bottom of the bowl. Knead until sticky and flour in bowl is incorporated. Scrape the sides of the bowl to incorporate clumps of dough. Cautiously add more white flour a couple of tablespoons at a time, kneading continuously. Stop when the inside of the bowl is clean and the dough is tacky but not sticky.

Pour a bit of oil in the bowl and shake to coat the dough ball. Let rise until doubled in bulk. Punch down and form loaf or rolls.

Let rise until puffy. Bake at 375 until brown.

Jim and Bobby Wooll

Stovetop Pressure Cooker Bread

This one doesn't need kneading.

1 1/2 cups lukewarm, non-chlorinated water (or one cup fresh water and 1/2 cup clean sea water)
1 Tbs. dry yeast
2 Tbs. sugar
2 tsp. salt (only if using all fresh water)
4 cups flour
2 Tbs. cornmeal

In a bowl, combine water, yeast, salt, and sugar. Let stand 15 minutes. Stir in flour and let rise in a warm place for 90 minutes or until double in bulk. Stir down and let rise again. Grease the pressure cooker thoroughly; add the corn meal and shake to coat the sides and bottom evenly. Place dough in pressure cooker and let rise again.

Cook over low heat for 45 minutes using a heat diffuser to spread out the stovetop heat. Lock the lid on the pressure cooker, but don't use the regulator valve. Steam will escape through the vent. Do NOT remove the lid during cooking. Remove from heat and let sit a few minutes. The bread will be white on top, but the sides and bottom will be a rich, crusty brown because of the cornmeal. So serve upside down.

Cathy Hauptert

The following is a dialogue from our Good Old Boat newsletter for subscribers:

Quick Bread

Quick Bread is made from 2 2/3 cups of self-rising flour (regular flour with 3 tsp baking powder is a substitute) and 12 ounces of beer (handily just the amount in a can) or 12 ounces of soda water if you'd rather drink the beer. Stir them together, and you wind up with a sticky mess that goes right into a greased bread loaf pan and is baked at 350 degrees (or thereabouts) for 30 to 40 minutes (or thereabouts). Since the oven on our boat isn't all that temperature-sensitive, we just put the bread in as soon as we've got the batter mixed and the oven is beginning to produce heat, and we take it out when it looks brown on top. Temperature and time have no meaning in this situation.

What do you get? A bread that is remarkably good for the little amount of effort. It has a crisp crust, a nice consistency, and a good flavor. It's good warm when it comes out of the oven. It's fine for sandwiches, and it makes great bread for French toast the following morning. If you like, add shredded cheddar cheese, herbs, or anything else you think might make a tasty addition to the bread.

Of course we had to understand how and why this works, so we have tried a few experiments of our own. We wondered if only beer did the trick, so we tried it with non-alcoholic beer. That works just fine. Then we learned that soda water works also. We haven't tried that, but are convinced it would be just fine, if perhaps a bit more bland. We tried substituting Bisquick for the self-rising flour. After all, what IS Bisquick anyway? The answer to that one is that Bisquick is NOT self-rising flour. The bread that resulted from that experiment was crumbly and tasted like a Bisquick muffin.

Enjoy your time aboard and still have warm bread when you want it!

Bisquick?

I checked the Bisquick label, and it's a mixture of flour, shortening, baking powder, and most notably buttermilk, which would contribute to the flavor. But there's a LOT of shortening — just look at the percentage of calories that come from fat, in the "nutritional info" part of the label. The shortening is probably what made the bread come out crumbly. (Incidentally, I like to top a casserole of chili with a crumbly "crust" of Bisquick.)

On board, you'd be better off carrying plain flour, which you can use for other things as well, plus baking powder, which should be kept in an airtight jar. (Together these two make self-rising flour.) The usual proportion is one level teaspoon of baking powder to each cup of sifted flour. (Use more baking powder if you add heavy stuff, like fruit or cheese, to the bread.)

My granny's recipe for baking-powder biscuits calls for one teaspoonful of baking powder, plus two tablespoonfuls of shortening (oil, butter, or lard), a good pinch of salt, and about 1/3 cup of milk or buttermilk per cup of plain flour. And I discovered long ago that if you don't have buttermilk, you could use plain yogurt with some milk or water stirred in. Mix the dry stuff, then cut in the shortening; then add the milk and stir it up. Knead it as few times as possible to get the dough to form (the more you knead, the tougher the biscuits will be); then pat it out, cut it into biscuits and bake until browned. I can't specify a baking time, knowing how variable stovetop ovens can be.
Peter Heinlein

Stovetop Beer Bread

I enjoyed reading the newsletter article about baking Quick Bread. I don't have an oven, so I make mine on my alcohol stove in a pressure cooker (using it as a "Dutch oven" by removing the seal and pressure gadget). The recipe is a bit different from yours — thought you might like to try it:

3 cups self-rising flour
1 egg
3 Tbs. sugar
1 can beer
1 small onion, chopped
1/2 small green pepper, chopped

Combine ingredients. Place in lightly greased and cornmeal- (or flour-) coated pan that will fit in the pressure cooker. Cover pressure cooker rack with foil and place pan on the rack. Cook for about one hour. Enjoy!

Pat Carlson

Bread dough redux

Peter Heinlein adds: I tried your bread formula with Guinness — a 14.9 oz. can, so it needed about another 2/3 cup of flour. Baked, it just filled a square two-quart Corningware casserole. It came out very interesting, but with a slight bitter undertone; next time I'll add a bit of sugar or molasses to counteract the bitterness of the Guinness. The flavor was excellent, though: rich and malty. Very good toasted. It's just about gone, so I'll do another batch for breakfast tomorrow morning, with Yuengling's this time.

A couple of bread-baking hints:

- Bread tastes better if it has a little salt in it — about a teaspoonful per loaf.
- Bread with sugar in it will brown faster on top, but may not be done in the middle — you still have to turn it out and knock on it to hear if it sounds "hollow."

- If you don't have non-stick bread pans (and I think they are GREAT), you can reduce the chance of bread — especially batter-bread — sticking by rubbing the pan with oil or shortening, then sprinkling it with cornmeal or flour. Knock it with the heel of your hand to distribute the stuff, then dump out the excess.
- Bread in deep, square pans takes longer to bake than bread in loaf-shaped pans, because the average distance to the center of the loaf is greater. The bread I did took over an hour at 350 and still was a bit moist in the middle. If you're in a real hurry, make it in muffin pans, and it will bake in one-third to one-half the time needed for a loaf.
- If you have some leftover mashed potatoes, you can add them to bread dough or batter, about one cup per three cups of flour (in a powder-raised bread like your beer bread, you should add about one more teaspoon of baking powder for each cup of mashed potatoes). They add a nice flavor and an interesting texture.