

ARDEN HOUSE WHOLEMEAL BREAD

INGREDIENTS

1,500	grams (1 bag)	Flour of the Forest wholemeal stoneground strong flour milled at Eling Tidemill
700	grams	Strong white plain flour
4	teaspoons	Maldon sea salt
43	grams	Baker's yeast
8	tablespoons	olive oil
1,350	ml	lukewarm water [warm to the finger: too hot and you kill the yeast; too cold and you retard its growth]

METHOD

1. Butter the inside of five 2lb loaf tins, and have somewhere cool to put them when the dough is ready. I use a cool fan oven which heats up rapidly and will be used to bake the bread later; otherwise, use sufficient cardboard boxes.
2. Boil a kettle of water and measure out 350 ml into a measuring jug; pour 1 litre of cold tap water into another jug; transfer one to the other and back and forth till the temperature is consistently lukewarm; add more hot or cold water if necessary, and reduce the total quantity to 1,350 ml. Dissolve the yeast in the larger jug and the salt in the smaller; you need to keep stirring the yeast till it all dissolves; use a separate spoon to stir up the salt. Keep the yeast and salt separate at this stage, or the salt will kill the yeast.
3. Mix the flours together thoroughly in a large mixing bowl, and add the oil; immediately add the yeasty water and mix well. Once thoroughly mixed, add the salty water, watching the consistency. You need a dough that can be kneaded: It should feel damp to the touch, but not sticky. Don't add quite all the salty water at once, so you can adjust the quantity.
4. Once the consistency is right, turn onto a lightly floured surface and knead vigorously for 10 minutes. Keep the surface floured to prevent the dough sticking to the surface (Have a quantity of white flour ready in a small container). This process will probably involve using quite a bit of extra flour, as the dough collects the flour from the surface.
5. Divide into five loaves: each loaf will be about 750 grams. Press into the loaf tins. Place the tins in your chosen cool place, so they are covered and out of draughts. Set a timer for about 50 minutes and then keep looking to see how the dough is rising.
6. Heat the oven to 220°C [180°C in a fan oven] or gas mark 7. Bake the loaves for about 50 minutes (use a timer again) or until brown and the base of the loaves sound hollow when tapped. If you don't have a fan oven which heats up quickly, have the loaves rise in large cardboard boxes and transfer at the right time into a pre-heated oven. The shock of sudden heat kills the yeast and the bread stops rising.
7. Remove the loaves from the oven, turn out of their tins and allow to cool on wire racks for at least two hours. Try a crust or two to check the flavour. Yum yum! Slice up the remainder and freeze, interleaved with cut up supermarket plastic bag material, in medium freezer bags.