

When I first started blogging I wrote a little post with the rather uninformative title of [How Much do I love this bread?](#) I learnt how to make this bread originally from Nils who blogs as the Inverse Cook at Ye Olde Bread Blogge.



I looked at that early post the other day and thought I can do a bit better than I did there, so rather than edit an old post I have had another go at making the bread and describing the process for those people who are new to this blog or for those who are looking for a really good rye/wheat sourdough style loaf to make.

One of the challenges of making rye breads is that we are fairly limited as to what rye flour we can get hold of here in England so here is the list of the flours I used.

- **Waitrose Organic Strong Bread Flour**
- **Waitrose Canadian Very Strong Bread Flour**
- **Shipton Mill Light Rye Flour**
- **Shipton Mill Dark Rye Flour**

One of the best ways to prepare rye flour is to pre-ferment or acidify it when using it as a major component in a dough. Jeffrey Hamelman writes in detail about the requirements of rye flour from pages 43 - 49 in his book, Bread.

I have been re-reading it recently as you know and though there is more detail there than the average person probably wants to hear about, some of it is quite interesting if you are a bread geek and want to understand, for example, why rye flour is more absorbent than wheat flour (it is higher in bran and usually finer), is so very sticky (high in pentosans which compete with glutenin and gliadin in the flour for moisture) and without using a sourdough, is prone to the dreaded 'starch attack' (due to being a grain higher in amylase enzymes which break starch into sugar and prevent good crumb formation).

Two things I remember even when I forget the science stuff.

Firstly, mix it gently and don't worry about kneading it, though folding it never hurts.

Secondly, for a good rye loaf the sourdough method nearly always gives better results than yeast.

To make Nils's lovely bread using English sourced flours this is what I did this week:

For the Sourdough

- 30 g of mature rye starter or culture.
- 150 g room temp water
- 75 g light rye
- 75 g dark rye



Mature rye starter has a slightly orangey tinge to it.



Mix to a smooth paste and leave for 12 - 16 hours in a glass bowl.



You will be able to see a network of bubbles through the sour when it is acidified and the top of the sour should curve like a shallow upturned saucer.



When you put a spoon in the sourdough you should see holes and bubbles in it as above. It won't look like this wheat starter which is full of gluten and therefore looks quite different at this stage. The rye sourdough is more static in appearance than the wheat which is very lively and mobile. See the next photo:



For the final dough:-

- 300 g sourdough (keep a spoonful back for next time, feed and store)
- 220 g water - luke warm
- 100 g strong bread flour
- 100 g very strong bread flour (you can omit this and use all bakers flour)
- 75 g light rye
- 75 g dark rye
- 2 g dry yeast (you can omit this, but the resultant bread will take longer on the second prove and be sourer in taste)
- 9 g seasalt
- Mix the above together well until all the flour is mixed in and the colour even. Take your time doing this or use a mixer on a slow speed.



- The dough will seem very sloppy at first but will thicken up and become quite stiff.
- Lightly oil a clean bowl and move the dough into it, cover and leave for forty five minutes in a warm room. if your room is cold leave it for another half an hour or so



- Give the dough a turn. You can lightly oil your hands to prevent the dough sticking to it while you do this.
- Pat it out into a rectangle, and then fold it in by thirds as you would a letter. Turn it over, pat it out a little and repeat the folding.
- Return to the oiled bowl and cover with clingfilm or a damp teatowel.
- Leave for another forty five minutes. It should be feeling lighter and more bubbly by this point.

- Shape the loaf into a baton using fine rye flour on your worktop and your hands.



- Put on a floured sheet of parchment on a tray, or into a banneton dusted with rye flour.
- It should hold its shape fairly well free form.
- Dust the top with flour and cover with a damp tea towel.
- Leave for an hour in a warm place to prove.
- Heat oven to 240 - 260 C, if your oven goes that hot.
- Place a metal tray on the lower shelf of the oven to heat up. Boil a kettle.
- Uncover dough, slash the loaf, spray with water or dust with more flour or whatever you feel like doing.
- Have kettle with just boiled water next to oven.
- Open door put tray in or slide dough onto stone. Shut door. Grab kettle, open door again and fill little tray with half an inch or so of boiling water. Careful! Steam burns!



- Shut door.
- Bake at 260 C for five minutes then lower oven to 220 C for another 40 - 45 minutes.
- If the loaf starts to go to dark for your tastes, then reduce the temperature to 200 C at that point but be prepared to bake it for a little longer, until it sounds very hollow when thumped on the bottom and feels light in the hand.
- Leave to cool on a wire rack. Do not cut till cold, rye breads really need to be left for at least twelve hours before cutting to allow the crumb to stabilise and the crust to soften a little. Cutting it early the crumb will be gummy and it really is better left.



A useful thing to know....

Sending and Storing Starter

I recently sent a Twitter friend some of my rye starter in the post to play with before she went on a bread baking course. I simply mixed a lot of rye flour in with the starter till it had a consistency like bread crumbs, put it in a jiffy bag and in the post overnight. She revived it by feeding with flour and water and was baking with it within a few days. It's very easy to send sourdough in the post this way. The other way to do it is to spread the sourdough starter out thinly on a piece of parchment or greasproof paper, A dough scraper is useful for this, leave it to dry and then crumble it up into flakes. This is also a useful 'insurance' measure against inadvertently using all your starter by mistake one day in a bread.