

Bread making is a passion for some, while for others it's a way to have in-home made bread. Then there are those that like to enjoy the fruits of someone else's labour. There are still millions of people who do it simply because they need feed their families. I get pleasure from the sight of uniform loaves that have an aesthetic appeal, that smell great and can be enjoyed just as is. I used to hand knead all my bread, and while doing it would fondly remember the maple bread counter that Dad built Mom when they redid their kitchen in Vancouver about 40 years ago. It was the perfect height for Mom to knead on. It was secured on three sides, and made of 2" thick boards. Although it was a wee bit too high for me at the time, it would be perfect for me now, as I ended up to be the same height as my mom. We didn't consider it an essential when planning our kitchen, and now with the Kitchen Aid I can cope well without it. Before the arrival of the Kitchen Aid, I would stand at a broad expanse of the kitchen counter faithfully kneading for 10 minutes, or however long was required, all the time wishing I was just a couple of inches taller. But the view over our front meadow was always worth it.

The original version of this recipe is from Peter Reinhart's Brother Juniper's Bread Book. It is a favourite of mine, as it is good on its own, with a smear of butter, toasted, or the start of a great sandwich.

Use leftover barley or rice, or cook it earlier just for the recipe. It should be room temperature when added.

Struan Bread

3 round loaves - about 1 ½ lbs each

Ingredients:

2 c warm water

1T honey

3 T yeast

½ c medium cornmeal or oat bran

½ c large flake oats

1/3 c wheat bran

½ c brown sugar

4 t salt

6 – 7 c unbleached flour

¾ c cooked barley or cooked brown rice

3 T honey

¾ c buttermilk (or ¾ c milk with a teaspoon of lemon juice added)

1 egg – for egg wash

6 T poppyseeds for topping

Directions:

In the mixer bowl, put 2 c warm water, 1 T of honey and 3T yeast. Whisk gently and let proof for 10 minutes.

Add in ½ c cornmeal, ½ c rolled oats, ½ c brown sugar, 1/3 c wheat bran and 4 t salt. Whisk until combined.

Add in ¾ c cooked barley, 3 T honey and ¾ c buttermilk.

Stir in 2 c of flour.

Using the hook attachment of the mixer, start to knead the dough. Add in ½ c of flour at a time, kneading until incorporated each time. Continue to do this until you have a well-formed ball of kneaded dough in your bowl. You may not need the full 7 cups of flour. The dough should be moist but not sticking to the bowl. Once you get to this stage, knead for a full 7 minutes on a low speed.

Remove the dough from the hook and bowl. Grease the bowl, and return the dough to it, turning once to grease the top. I just use cooking spray. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let rest in a draft free, warm place for 1 hour.

Punch down, and cut your dough into 3 equal sized loaves. I usually weigh the whole, divide the dough accordingly. Form into round loaves, by flattening the portion with the heel of your hand, and then proceed to work the dough towards the center from all the edges. Once you get to the center, use your fingers to work the dough together and pinch the final small seam. Put the loaves in a triangle on a greased 11" x 17" pan that has been sprinkled with cornmeal.

Cover loosely with plastic wrap or a barely damp towel. Let rest for ½ an hour.

Preheat the oven to 350°

Whisk the egg into 4 cups of tepid water. Using a pastry brush, brush the exposed surface of the loaves with the egg wash.

Take a small handful of poppy-seeds. Using the edge of one hand to catch any excess, sprinkle poppy-seeds thoroughly over each loaf.

Bake in the center of the oven for 45 minutes. The crusts should be nut brown.

When it has had a bit of time to cool, cut off a piece and enjoy!