



oh...how I KNEAD the dough

by Judi Burton

The aroma of freshly made bread wafting through the house reminds us of a simpler time when there were no credit card debts or hedge fund scandals. Women washed clothes outside over a bucket of soapy water, and everyone told stories and spoke of current events around the fireplace. Making bread was an all-day affair; mothers would set aside their needlepoint or household duties to go knead the dough.

Bakers still uphold the time-honored tradition of waking up at 4 am to begin their morning routine of pumping out fresh loaves by opening time, much to the delight of devoted patrons. I know this because I was a baker.

The emotional connection to bread goes deeper than just tearing open a steamy slice and letting its goodness reach your soul. The preparation is a sort of therapy for those who bake it. Being that I've never been a morning person, I was often in a touchy mood when I first got to work. I was an 18-year-old with emotional morning flare ups that were anything but rare. However, as I went from prepping to mixing to kneading my 150 loaves, my mind drifted into a state of calm. The joy of slicing the dough with a baker's cutter, then throwing it with all my might to the counter, hearing the satisfying slap, and then kneading my anger right out of myself was therapeutic down to my core. On the days that I was the angriest, I would work faster and make bread that received the greatest number of accolades. I believe that when happy people make products, it often leaves a trail of happiness,

which connects with those who end up with them. But I also believe bread is a curious sort of product that requires intense passion to turn out well.

The rhythmic cadence of pushing the pliable dough across your bare palms, turning, and then pulling at the corners to push again, brings peace and uses up excess energy. We live in a world of ups and downs, where a slight from a Facebook friend can send one hurtling into a depth of pessimism. Many have outlets for their emotions like kickboxing or swimming I suggest adding bread baking to the list of stress-reducing activities.

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As Thanksgiving approaches, we reflect on how simple life used to be. A fresh-baked loaf of soft bread presented at the Thanksgiving table is not only impressive, but also easy to create. The time one spends on it is easily dispersed between roasting your turkey and making your side dishes. By the time you get to the dough, you will most likely be in a state of chaos and in need

of some kneading. You can take this time to vent out your frustrations on the forgiving dough.

Here is a very easy recipe that is an all-time favorite in my house. It yields two beautiful golden-brown loaves, and most people already have the ingredients in their cupboard. Try making it a few days before Thanksgiving for practice. If it comes out a little flat, you can always use it in your stuffing by dicing it into cubes, tossing it in your favorite seasoning, and setting it on a screen to dry.

Honey Wheat Bread

1 1/3 cups lukewarm water

2 envelopes active dry yeast

1/3 cup honey

1/4 cup vegetable oil

1 tsp salt

3 1/2 to 4 cups whole-wheat flour



Place 1/2 cup water in bowl
Pour in both packets of yeast
Whisk lightly to dissolve
Wait for it to bubble slightly
Add remaining water, honey, oil, salt and 1 cup flour
Whisk for 5-7 minutes, careful to get the sides of the bowl
Stir in enough flour to make soft dough
Use your hands to get the dough mixed
Sprinkle a clean, dry counter with flour and knead dough on counter until smooth (dough can be slightly sticky)
Place dough in greased bowl, cover with a cloth towel and set on barely warm stove
(This is a perfect place when the turkey is in the oven, but nothing is on the stove)
Let the dough double its size (about an hour)
Punch dough down in bowl
Take out and cut in half
Place one half back in covered bowl until first half is finished kneading
Knead dough by throwing it forcefully onto floured counter
Push dough down, forcing all air bubbles out
Form into a flat circle
Take one corner and fold to center
Push down with palm and turn dough 1/4 the way around; take another corner and do it again
Keep adding flour until soft, pliable and not sticky
Form dough into an oval ball and pinch the bottom ends together
Place into a 9x5 greased loaf pan
Repeat with the other dough
Cover and let rise until doubled in size
Bake at 375F for 30-35 minutes or until top is golden brown and it smells like fresh-baking bread throughout the house
Let cool in pan ...

Serve and enjoy!

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