

# 100 Great Breads

Paul Hollywood





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Photographs by Neil Barclay



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### **Introduction**

Bread is the one natural food that has been with us for centuries, but in recent years it has taken a back seat while we indulged our passion for fast foods bursting with additives and E numbers.

I grew up in Liverpool, the oldest of three boys, and food to us was just a source of energy. It wasn't until I began to make bread in my father's bakery that I realized that the variations and different types of bread were endless and that bread was not just the thick, white, sliced stuff to make bacon butties with!

The aroma of freshly baked bread evokes feelings and memories in all of us – a snug kitchen in the winter after school and a still- warm loaf on the table waiting to be smothered in butter and home-made strawberry jam is one of my favourites, but who can resist ciabatta straight from the oven, stuffed with glossy black olives, garlic and fresh coriander? Close your eyes and you're sitting on a vine-covered, sun-drenched terrace, sipping a glass of rich, red wine and surrounded by friends and family.

All the recipes in this book have special memories for me; some are from my childhood and some were discovered during my travels abroad. The textures and flavours all vary greatly, reflecting their origins, and I have added something of myself to all these recipes to make them unique and, I hope, satisfying to recreate.

Baking bread is a very sociable experience – you will find the whole family crowding into your kitchen, drawn by the irresistible fragrance of salmon brioche or a potato and rosemary focaccia. So pull up the chairs, break open a bottle and enjoy the novel experience of eating a home-baked loaf of bread.







## **The History of Bread**

**I am a man who has bread in Heliopolis**

**My bread is in heaven with the Sun God,**

**My bread is on earth with Keb.**

**The bark of evening and of morning**

**Brings me the bread that is my meat**

## **From the house of the Sun God.**

( *Book Of The Dead*, Ancient Egypt)

From the depths of time bread has been the one common factor that has linked the world's cultures together.

A recent excavation in Egypt, two miles south of the Sphinx, revealed an ancient bakery, complete with moulds and working tools of the day. Meanwhile in London, builders working along the banks of the River Thames unearthed ancient loaves of bread dating back to Roman times.

The first breads made were dense and unappealing – the grain was crushed and mixed with water to create a gruel, which was then left over a fire to cook hard. They were ideal for early man, being easy to carry on the hunt or into battle, and they would keep for days at a time, but they were not very appetizing.

It was the ancient Egyptians who took baking 10 steps further. They discovered that the crushed grain and water mush, if left in a warm and moist atmosphere, would produce bubbles – the first sign of risen bread. This, mixed with fresh flour and then baked, would produce an aerated bread – and so the first yeast was created.

Bread was incredibly important to the Egyptians. The lower classes lived almost exclusively on bread and it was used as a form of payment by the Pharaohs for work done on the pyramids and

temples. Today's Egyptians still eat their meat or vegetables stuffed into loaves of bread, rather like a kebab.

The people of Israel were influenced by their contact with the Egyptians and began to produce a bread of their own. Theirs was a nomadic society, so until they settled, they baked their dough in the ashes of fires, producing a flat, cake-like bread. Later on they began to build ovens and granaries, some of which, like the hill fortress of Masada, are still visible today.

The Greeks began by importing their corn from Egypt, but later began to cultivate their own crops. Grain equalled power in Ancient Greece, land owners were eligible for high offices when a certain standard of productivity was obtained, and in the 7th century BC the

‘Party of Bread’ – the most prosperous farmers – ruled Athens.

The Roman Empire also imported their flour from overseas, from such places as Egypt and North Africa and the Romans were

responsible for the introduction of the water mill. These

entrepreneurs had also developed elegant tastes and many of the breads made then would be acceptable today – sesame seed bread,

almond bread and milk bread, to name but a few. After the Roman Empire eventually collapsed, it appears that even as late as the 5th century, many Europeans were still making their bread at home.

The art of bread making progressed slowly during the Dark Ages and baking remained a family task in the villages and countryside for many hundreds of years. Eventually, communal ovens were

introduced and, for a fee, bakers baked off the bread that was brought in. Some of these communal ovens are still currently in operation in France, where they consider the practice of bread making to be an art form.

Today, there are still people all over the world who bake their bread daily. The Bedouin in Petra, Jordan, bake on a bakestone, the modern version of which is a metal dome, lightly oiled and set over a flame. In some European countries families still come together to bake bread and make it a social occasion, and some even have specially made ovens in their back gardens for just such an event.

Bread holds a social, religious and gastronomic significance for all of us, but it is not just the act of breaking the bread that we should honour, but also the act of making or creating the bread.







## **Tools, Techniques and Tips**

### **Tools**

There are only a few tools needed to make a good loaf:

#### **1. Baking trays and loaf tins**

Any 450 g/1 lb traditional loaf tin is ideal for making breads. There are several varieties available, from Teflon to non-stick; some tins have straight sides, while others, such as farmhouse tins, tend to be more rounded.

Do remember to grease the tins – I use olive oil – before putting the dough in as this will ensure that the bread doesn't stick.

Baking trays are lined throughout – I line my trays with silicone paper or baking parchment. Greaseproof paper tends to stick.

#### **2. Ovens**

I have made bread in or on every oven imaginable, from open- flame to fan-assisted to range cookers; all are great for baking bread.

Every oven has a character, especially in professional bakeries, and hot spots are common. Be aware of your oven as it may have these

elusive hotspots; use them when baking and remember to turn your bread if the oven is a little hot at the back – the main reason for ovens being especially hot at the back is because over-impatient bakers look in the oven too often.

Most of the recipes in this book need oven temperatures between 200°–220°C/400°–425°F/gas mark 6–7. This is more than enough heat to bake bread; most industrial bakeries bake at

250°C/475°F/gas mark 9+, the main reason being to keep moisture in the loaf. The longer a loaf takes to colour or bake the drier it will be.

#### **3. A good serrated knife or a sharp blade**



I have no preferences with the knives that I use – any will do, but just remember to keep them sharp: the cut on the bread is very

important, not only for the look, but for the crumb texture.

## **Techniques**

### **Yeast**

There are two main types of yeast available in the supermarkets today – dried and instant. Using dried yeast makes more work for yourself because you have to add water and sugar and leave it to froth. Instant yeast is more user-friendly because you literally throw it straight into the flour. However, be aware that this is a concentrated yeast and you will need less of it. All the recipes in this book use fresh yeast, but I would suggest you use instant yeast if you can't obtain fresh – if you use instant or dried then use 25 per cent less than the recipe states. Fresh yeast is available from most

supermarkets nowadays – ask at the bakery department for a small amount and more often than not they will sell it to you. Failing that, ask at your local bakery.

**Remember:** all recipes use fresh yeast, so if you are using instant or dried yeast, reduce the quantities a little.

### **Mixing the ingredients for the dough**

When mixing the ingredients, avoid contact between the yeast and salt: salt kills yeast, which means the bread won't rise.

### **Kneading**

Kneading is an important part of bread making. The way I knead is very simple: start by making an indentation with the palms of your hands into the middle of the dough – not too deep – then lift up the dough at the top and press it into the hole you have just made. Turn the dough and repeat and keep repeating this process for the length of time stated in the recipe. The

kneading times I give may fluctuate by 2 minutes each way as you get more proficient.

### **Adding flavourings to the dough**

Always add any flavourings after the dough has been kneaded and rested for at least 1 hour as this helps the dough to stabilize before being pumped with any additions.

When adding ingredients such as onions and garlic – ingredients that are intrinsically acidic – do not add too much as this retards or slows down the rising of the dough.

### **Tips**

Use this book as a base, but try incorporating your own ingredients and experiment with flavours and textures.

You do not always need to dissolve yeast in warm water, just lob it in.

You do not always need to use warm water when making bread, the bread will rise anyway, even in the fridge. The slower the rising (proving) time the more flavour the bread will have.

The recipes in this book have measured water contents, but flours differ, so you may need a little extra water or a little less.

When rolling out and kneading the dough, do not coat the table in inches of flour. The dough will pick it up and tighten up too much.

I do not normally cover the dough when it is resting; a little skinning on the top should be incorporated back into the dough.

Always preheat your oven so that your bread has somewhere to go when it is ready and not you!

None of the breads in this book require steam or pots of water in the oven, I like the crusty earthy look of home-baked bread –

there's nothing better.

I put most of my breads onto a cooling rack when they come out of the oven – this is to prevent the bread from sweating and

going soft.

Do not store baked bread in a fridge – it will go stale three times quicker than if left in a bread bin.

### **Wheatsheaf Loaf**

To help you with the skills needed to make bread, your first task is to make a wheatsheaf loaf, which is a display bread and is pictured

[here. If you can make a wheatsheaf you can make anything in this](#)

book. Before you begin, read the tips on the previous pages.

**750 g/1 lb 10 oz strong white flour, plus extra for dusting 60 g/2 1/4 oz salt**

**2**

**5 g/1 oz fresh yeast**

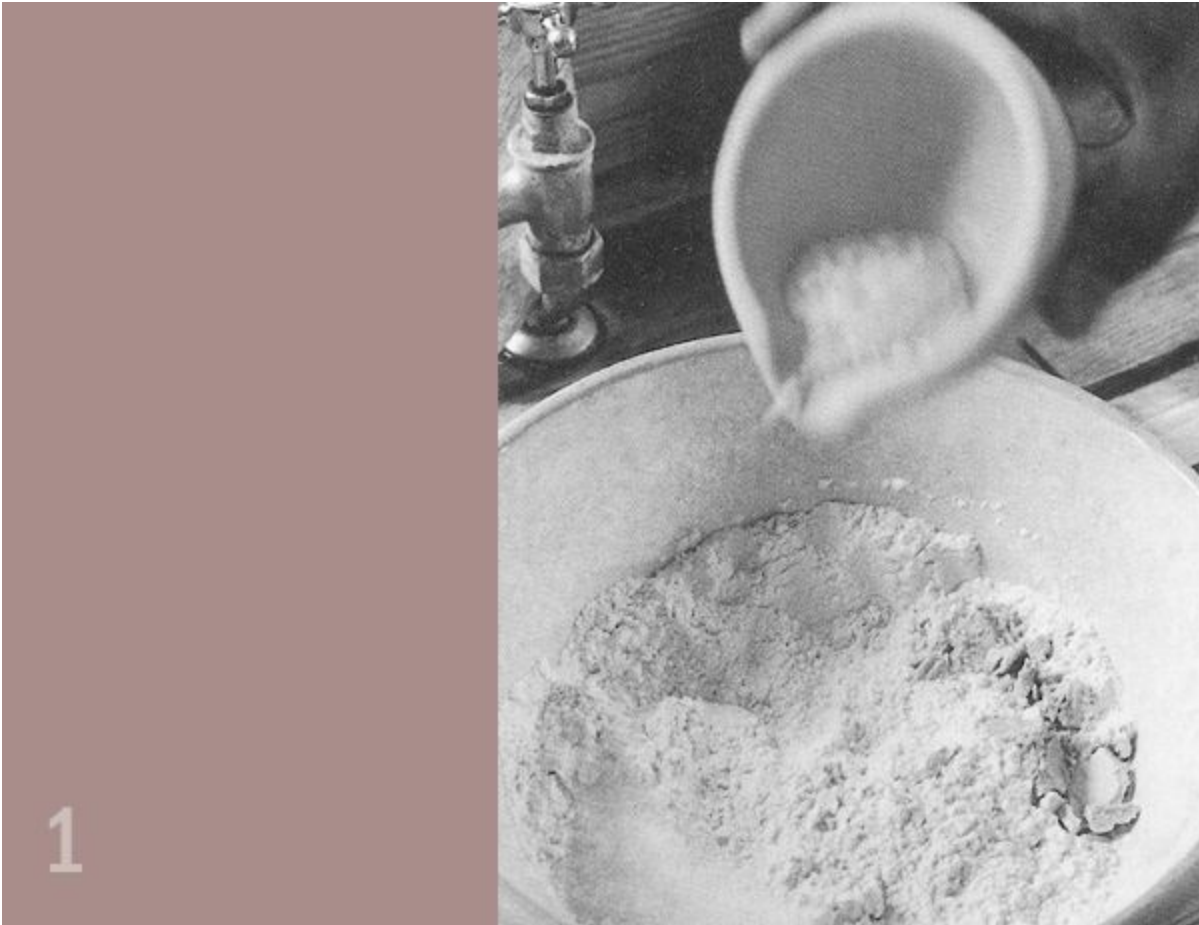
**4**

**60 ml/2 fl oz olive oil**

**420 ml/14 1/4 fl oz water**

**2**

**1 egg, beaten, for eggwash**

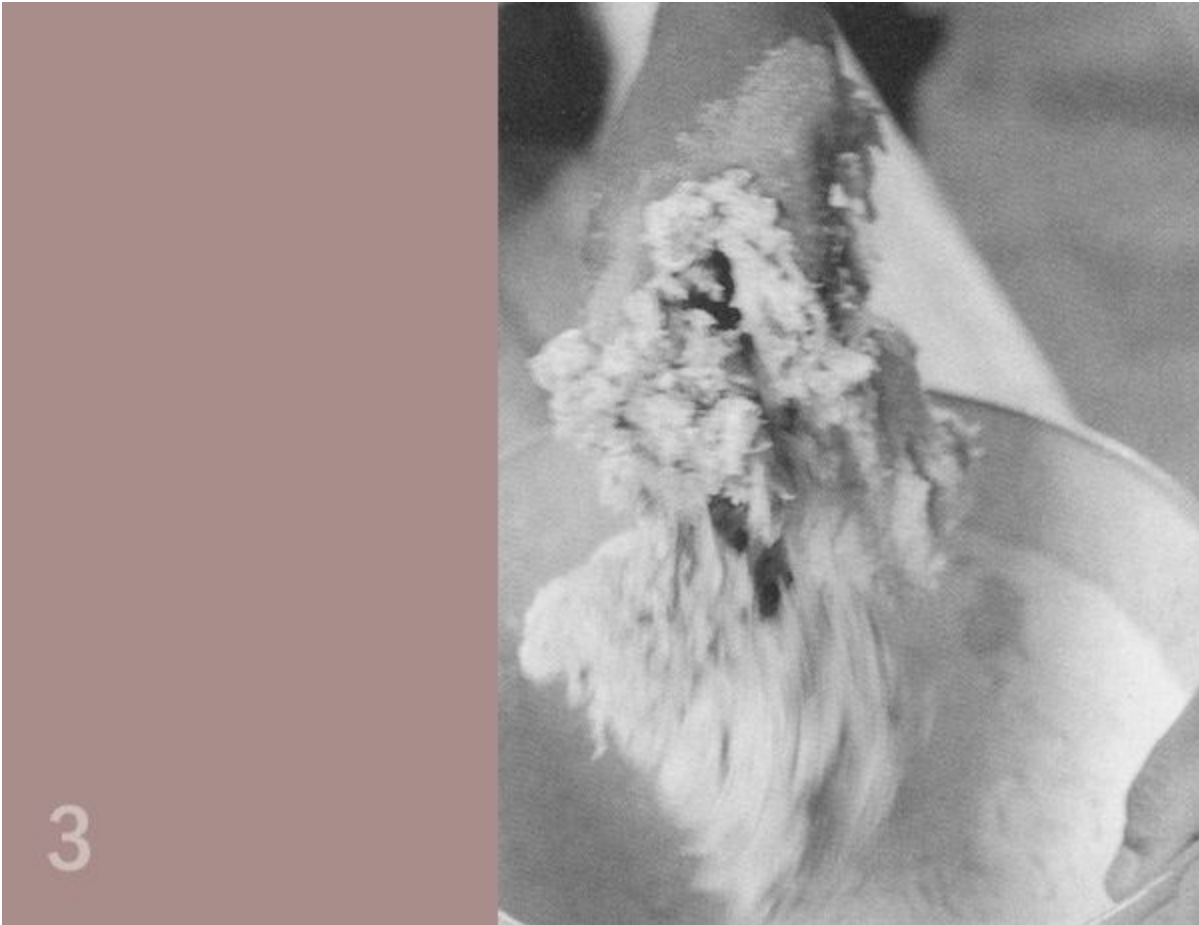


Put the flour in a bowl about 30.5 cm/12 inches in diameter, then add the salt to the left and the yeast to the right. This is to avoid contact between the yeast and the salt (remember, salt kills yeast on contact, which means the bread won't rise). Although you do not need to avoid contact between the two when making a wheatsheaf, it is a good practice to get into.



Add the olive oil and slowly start to add the water. (It's not necessary to use virgin olive oil since a lot of the flavour of the oil will be lost during baking.)





Begin squeezing the mixture together in your hands. Your aim is to pick up all the flour in the bowl with the water – you may need a little extra or a little less water. What you are looking for is a soft, pliable dough.



Now shape the dough roughly into a ball and tip it out onto a lightly floured surface. (I say lightly floured because most people make the fatal error of adding too much flour and tightening up the dough too much, and what started as a perfect dough ends up like a brick.)