

YEASTED BREAD IS MADE PRINCIPALLY WITH WHEAT FLOUR, which is what gives bread its distinctive elastic texture in dough form and its airy quality when baked. Other grains do not have the gluten content of wheat, but they can be incorporated into the bread to give variation in texture, taste, and nutriment. Rye, corn, millet, barley, rice, oats, and buckwheat may be used. Further variation of flavor and texture involves the use of milk, eggs, oil, butter, sugar, honey, or molasses. Once the dough is ready for baking, there are many ways to shape and bake it.

The Tassajara Yeasted Bread recipe leads into all the other yeasted bread and pastry recipes: Rye-Oatmeal Bread, Cornmeal-Millet Bread, English Muffins, Cinnamon Rolls. Make the basic bread once, and you will be ready to tackle any of the recipes. Give it your time and attention.

Here is an outline of the instructions that follow:

I. Getting Started

A. Mixing Up the Sponge

B. Setting the Sponge to Rise

C. Advantages of the Sponge Method

II. Seeing It to the Finish

A. Folding in Oil, Salt, and Dry Ingredients

B. Kneading the Dough

C. Rising and Punching the Dough

D. Shaping the Loaves

E. Preparing to Bake and Baking

F. Storing

Getting Started

All measurements are for the basic Tassajara Yeasted Bread recipe, page 34.

- 3 cups lukewarm water (85° to 105°)
- 1½ tablespoons dry yeast (2 packets)
- ¼ cup sweetening (honey, molasses, or brown sugar)
- 1 cup dry milk (optional)
- 4 cups whole wheat flour (substitute 1 or more cups unbleached white flour if desired)

Measure 3 cups water and put it in a good-sized bowl. "Lukewarm" does not feel warm or cold on your wrist.

Sprinkle the dry baker's yeast over the water and stir to dissolve. For faster rising and lighter bread, use an additional package of yeast (about ¾ tablespoon).

Add ¼ cup sweetening. You can rinse the measuring cup out in the water if you wish. Two tablespoons of sweetening would be quite sufficient for the growth of the yeast; amounts larger than ¼ cup may be added to make more of a breakfast bread.

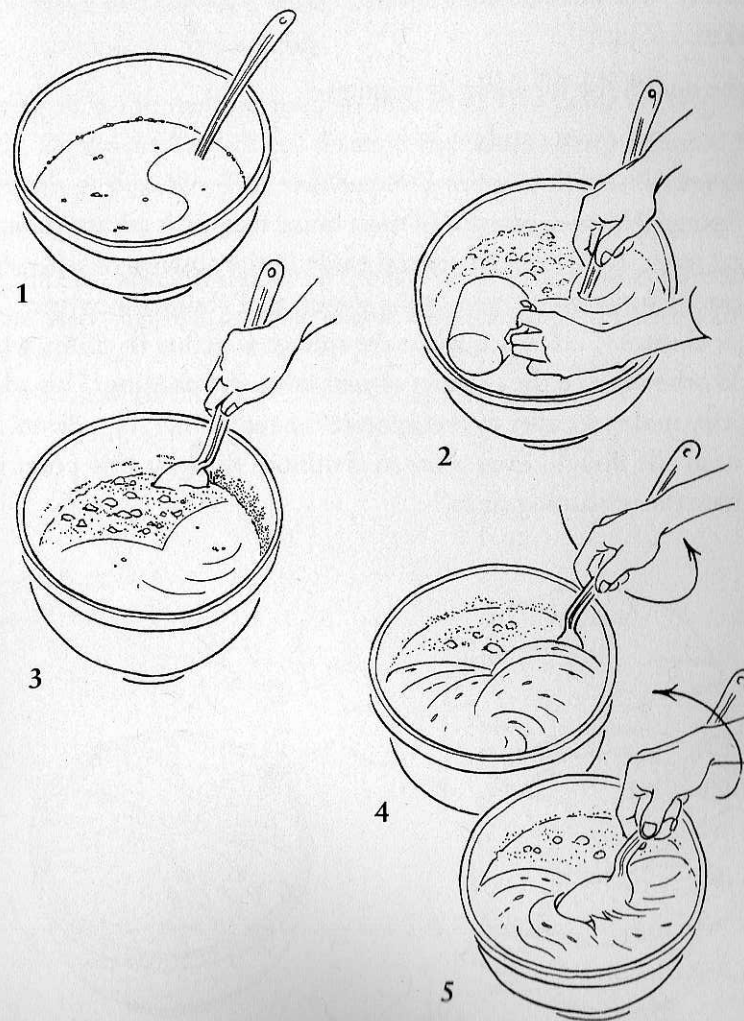
Add dry milk and stir to dissolve. Complete dissolving is not necessary (Figure 1), as the ingredients will become well mixed when the batter is thicker. The bread will have a grainier taste and a coarser texture if the dry milk is omitted. In this case less flour will be needed.

If eggs are desired (as in some of the variations), beat and add at this stage, adding more flour as needed for proper consistency of the dough. Or the eggs may be added to the completed sponge *after* the flour is in and the batter beaten.

Then add whole wheat flour a cup or so at a time, stirring briskly after each addition (Figure 2). As the mixture thickens, begin *beating* with a spoon, stirring up and down in small circular strokes at the surface of the mixture (Figures 4 and 5). Scrape the sides of the bowl occasionally

(Figure 3). After 4 cups of flour have been added, the mixture will be quite thick, but still beatable—a thick mud.

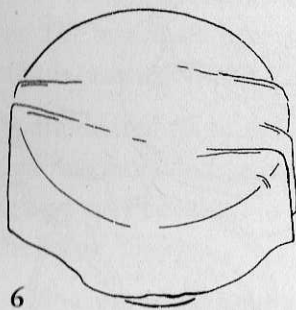
Now beat about 100 times (Figures 4 and 5) until the batter is very smooth. Do this at the surface of the dough, ducking the spoon under the surface, then bringing it up above the surface, pulling up the batter in a circular motion. The batter will become more elastic as you do this and air will be incorporated into the sponge.



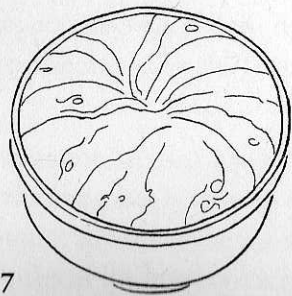
cover the bowl with a damp towel to keep off drafts (Figure 6). Set in a warmish place (about 85° to 100°). In the summer almost any place will do. Otherwise set it on top of the stove over or near a pilot light, on a shelf above a hot-water heater, in an oven with a pilot light, or in an oven that has been on for several minutes and then turned off. If the bread is rising in a cooler place (70° to 85°), it will rise more slowly. If it is frozen, it will not rise at all but will when it is thawed. Heat above 125° will kill the yeast, which is what happens when the bread is baked.

Let the dough rise for about 45 minutes.

The Sponge Method, omitted in most bread recipes, is advantageous in several ways. The yeast gets started easily in the absence of salt, which inhibits its functioning, and in the presence of abundant oxygen. Gluten (or elasticity) is formed when the sponge stretches in rising, which would otherwise be the product of *your* labor in kneading. This added elasticity makes it easier to incorporate the remaining ingredients and to knead the dough. Even a 10- to 15-minute rising at this point will facilitate the remaining steps.



6



7

Seeing It to the Finish

All measurements are for the basic Tassajara Yeasted Bread recipe, page 34.

4 teaspoons salt

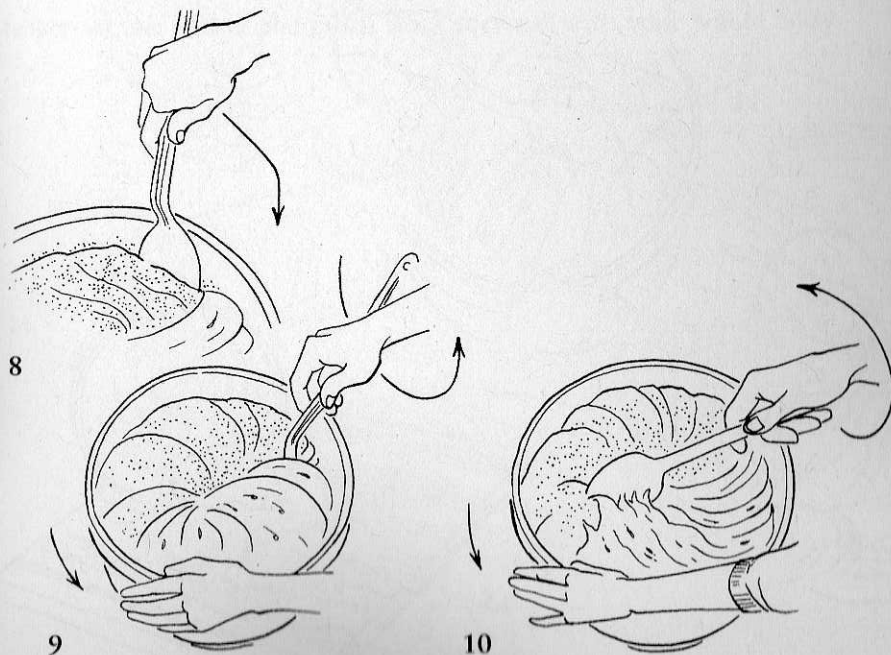
1/3 cup oil or butter

3 cups whole wheat flour

1 cup additional whole wheat flour (or unbleached white flour) for kneading

Folding in is the method used to mix from this point on (Figures 8, 9, 10). *Do not stir*. Do not cut through the dough. Keep it in one piece as much as possible. This will improve the elasticity and strength of the dough.

Sprinkle in the salt and pour on the oil. Stir around the *side* (or bottom) of the bowl (Figure 8) and fold over toward the center (Figures 9 and 10).



8

9

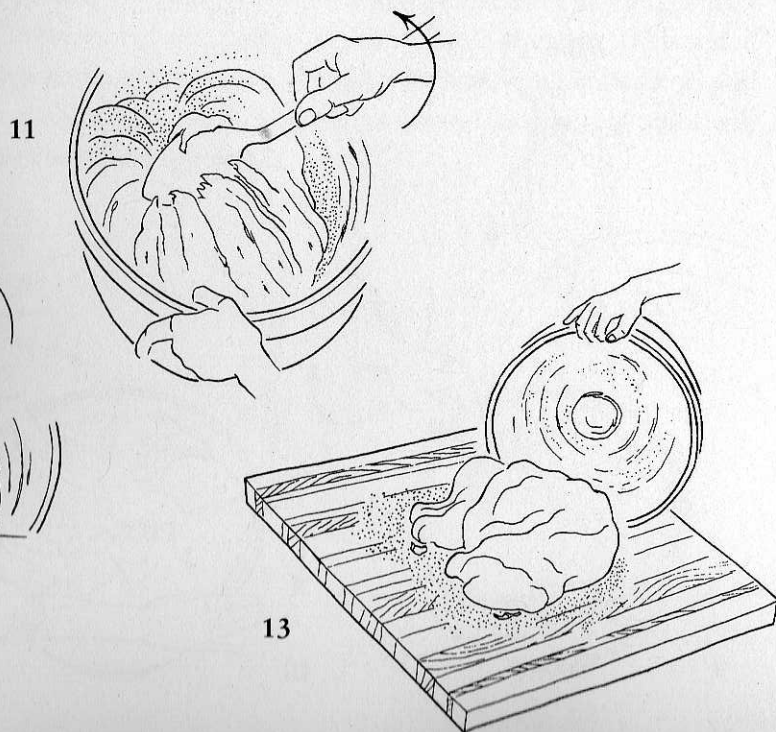
10

*Folding in
Oil, Salt,
and Dry
Ingredient*

[MAKES 2
LOAVES]

Turn the bowl toward you a quarter turn with your left hand and repeat folding until oil and salt are incorporated (Figures 8, 9, 10).

Sprinkle the dry ingredients on the surface of the dough about a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup at a time. Fold the wet mixture from the sides (and bottom) of the bowl on top of the dry ingredients. Turn the bowl a quarter turn between folds (Figures 8, 9, 10). When the dry ingredients are moistened by the dough, add some more dry ingredients. Continue folding. After adding 2 cups of wheat flour, the dough will become very thick and heavy, but don't be intimidated. Continue folding in an additional cup of flour (Figures 11 and 12) until the dough comes away from the sides and bottom of the bowl, sitting up in the bowl in a big lump (Figure 12). The dough is ready for kneading when it can be turned out of the bowl in pretty much of a piece, except for a few remaining scraps (Figure 13). Take time to scrape the bowl (as well as the spoon), and lay the scrapings on top of the dough on a floured board. It is not necessary to wash the bread bowl at this point; just oil it lightly.



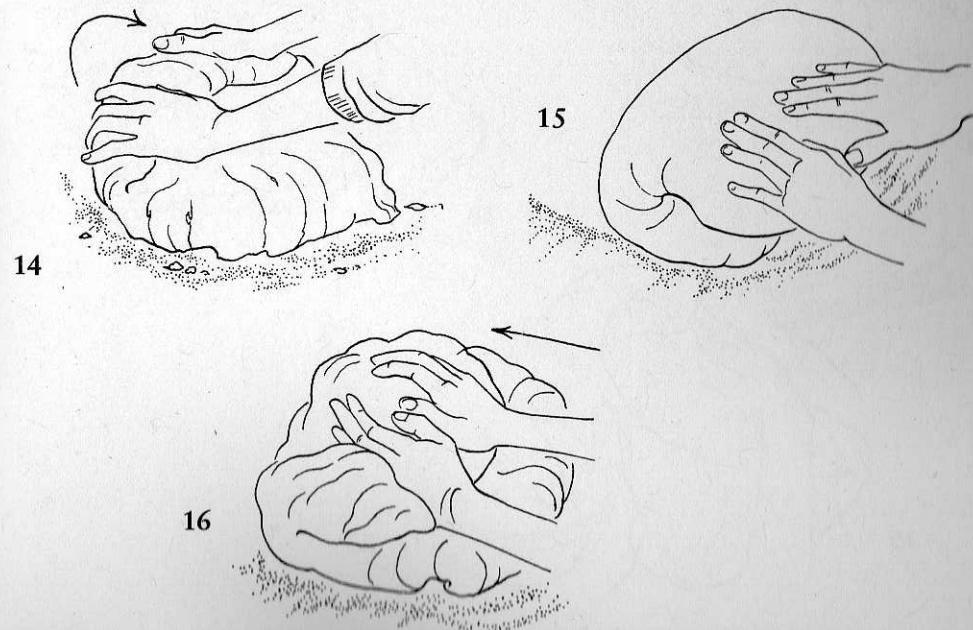
The kneading surface, a board or a tabletop, should be at a height on which your hands rest comfortably when you are standing straight. You need to be able to exert some downward pressure. Keep the surface floured enough to prevent the dough from sticking during kneading. The purpose of kneading is to get the dough well mixed, give it a smooth, even texture, and further develop its elasticity.

Flour your hands and sprinkle some flour on top of the dough.

Picking up the far edge of the dough, fold the dough in half toward you, far side over near side (Figure 14), so that the two edges are approximately lined up evenly (Figure 15).

Place your hands on the near side of the dough so that the top of your palms (just below the fingers) are at the top front of the dough (Figure 15).

Push down and forward, centering the pushing through the heels of the hands more and more as the push continues (Figure 16). Relax your fingers at the end of the push. Rock forward with your whole body

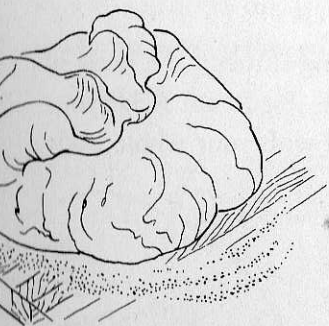


*Kneading
the Dough*

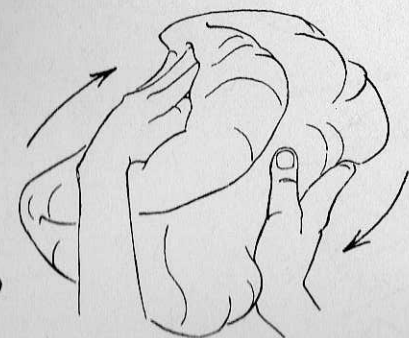
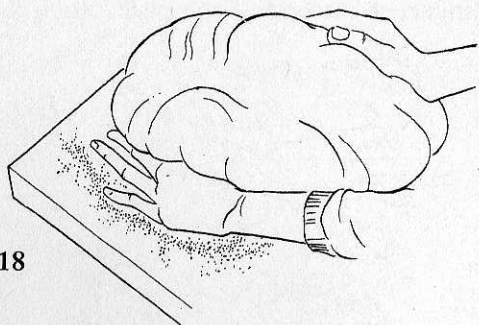
rather than simply pushing with your arms. Apply steady, even pressure, allowing the dough to give way at its own pace. The dough will roll forward with the seam on top, and your hands will end up about two-thirds of the way toward the far side of the dough. Removing your hands, see that the top fold has been joined to the bottom fold where the heels of the hands were pressing (Figure 17).

Turn the dough a quarter turn (Figures 18 and 19); clockwise is usually easier for right-handed persons. Fold in half toward you as before (Figure 19) and rock forward, pushing as before (Figure 16).

Turn, fold, push. Rock forward. Twist and fold as you rock back. Rock forward. Little by little you will develop some rhythm. Push firmly yet gently so that you stretch but do not tear the dough.



18

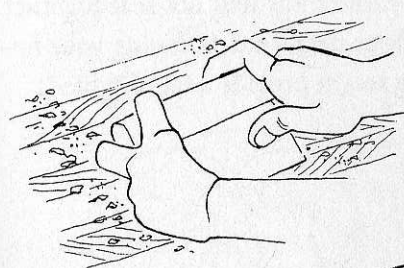


Add flour to the board or sprinkle it on top of the dough as necessary to keep the dough from sticking to the board or your hands. As you knead, the dough will begin stiffening up, holding its shape rather than sagging; it will become more and more elastic, so that it will tend to stretch rather than tear. It will stick to your hands and the board less and less until no flour is necessary to prevent sticking. The surface of the dough will be smooth and somewhat shiny.

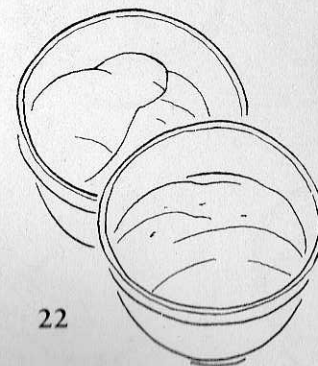
As you continue kneading, you may stop occasionally to scrape the bread board (Figure 20) and rub dough off your hands, and incorporate these scraps into the dough. Then re-flour the kneading surface.

When you are finished kneading, place the dough (Figure 21) in the oiled bread bowl smooth side down, and then turn it over so the creases are on the bottom (Figure 22). The oiled surface will keep a crust from forming on the top of the dough.

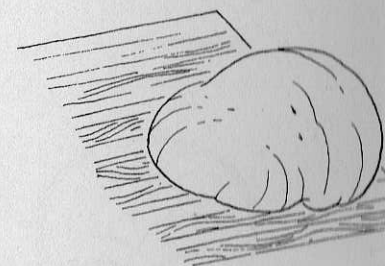
Cover the dough with a damp towel and set it in a warm place.



20



22



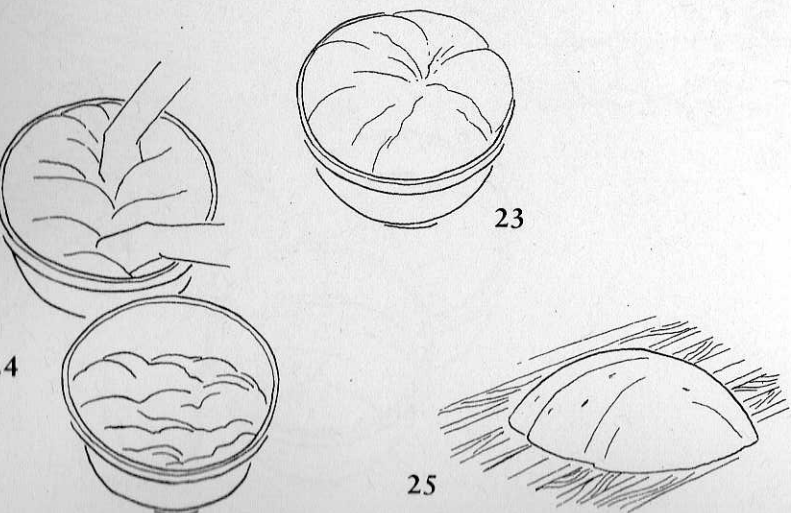
21

Let the dough rise 50 to 60 minutes, until nearly doubled in size (Figure 23).

"Punch down" by pushing your fist into the dough, as far as it will go, steadily and firmly. Do this maybe fifteen or twenty times all over the dough (Figure 24). It will not punch down as small as it was before rising. Cover.

Let rise 40 to 50 minutes, until nearly doubled in size. If you are short on time, the second rising may be omitted. The loaves will be slightly denser.

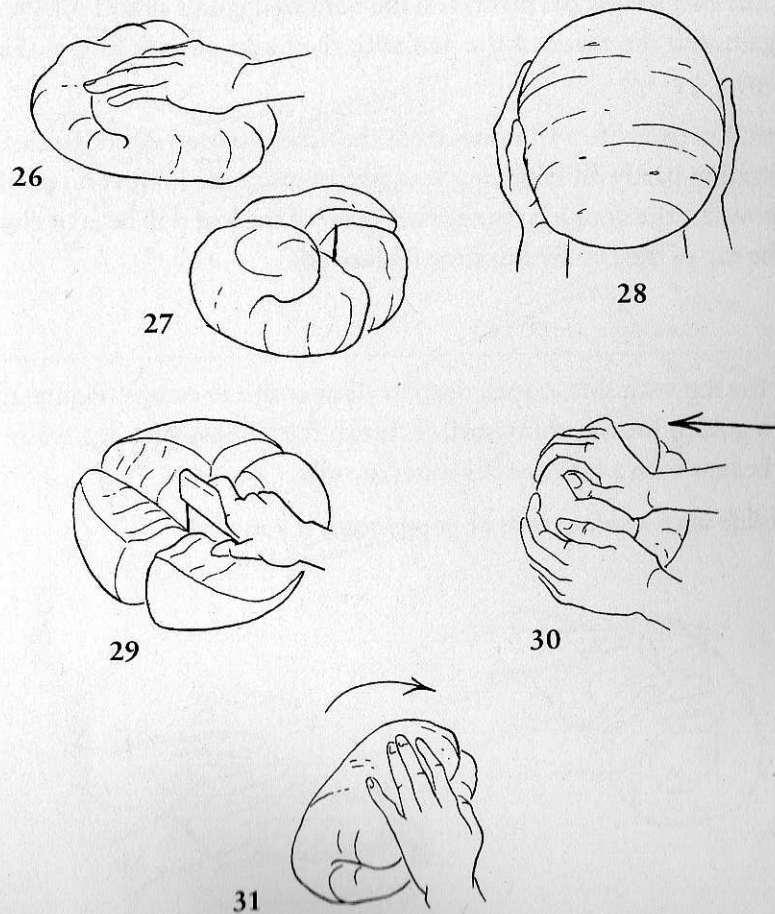
Start the oven preheating. (Adjustment of oven temperatures may be necessary. Electric ovens, especially, should probably be set 25° lower than indicated temperature.) Turn the dough onto the board (Figure 25). If it is of the proper consistency (i.e., moisture content), you won't need much flour on the board. If it is too wet, it will stick on the board. Use flour as necessary. If it is too dry, the folds will not seal together easily. It's too late now, but add less flour next time. (Dipping your fingers in water or oil as you are shaping might provide a bit of "glue.")



Shape the dough into a ball by folding it to the center all the way around (Figure 26) as in kneading without the pushing (Figure 27). Turn smooth side up, and tuck in the dough all the way around (Figure 28).

Cut into two even pieces (Figure 29). Shape each piece into a ball, and let them sit for 5 minutes.

For each loaf, knead the dough with your right hand (Figure 30). Turn and fold it with your left hand (Figure 31). Do this about five or six times until dough is compact. This gives the loaf added "spring," similar to winding a clock. After the final push, turn the dough a quarter turn.



beginning at the near edge, roll up the dough into a log shape (Figure 32). With the seam on the bottom, flatten out the top with your fingertips (Figure 33). Square off the sides and ends (Figure 34). Turn the dough over and pinch the seams together all the way along it (Figure 35).

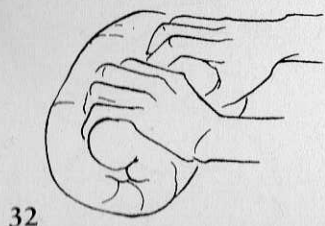
Have bread pans in a stack. Put some oil in the top one and turn it over, letting it drain into the next one (Figure 36). Place a loaf in the oiled pan with the seam up. The dough can fill the pan one-half to two-thirds full. A 4 1/2- by 8 1/2-inch pan will make a loaf smaller but higher than a 4 1/4- by 9 1/4-inch pan.

Flatten the dough with the backs of your fingers (Figure 37). Turn the loaf over so that the seam is on the bottom (Figures 38 and 39). Press again into the shape of the pan with the backs of your fingers (Figure 37).

Cover. Let rise 20 to 25 minutes from the time you finished the last loaf, depending partly on how long you take to make the loaves and partly on how fast the dough is rising. The center of the loaf will be at or close to the top of the pan by this time (Figure 40).

Cut the top with slits 1/2 inch deep to allow steam to escape (Figure 41). For a golden brown, shiny surface, brush the surface with egg wash: 1 egg beaten with 2 tablespoons water or milk.

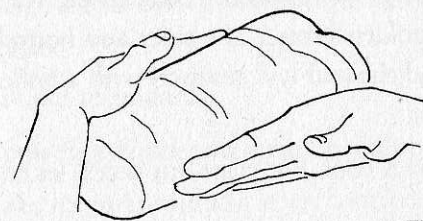
Sprinkle with sesame seeds or poppy seeds if you wish.



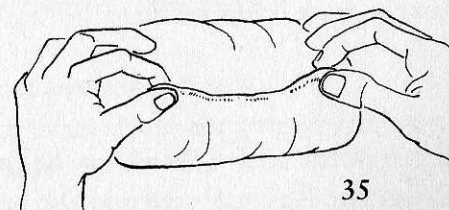
32



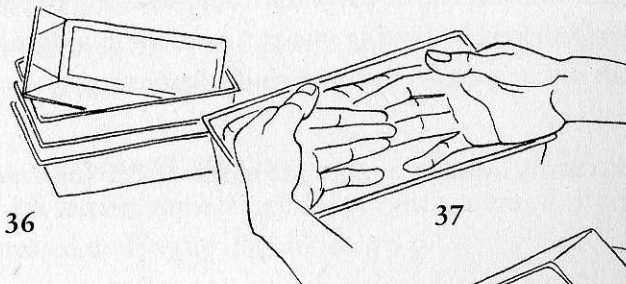
33



34

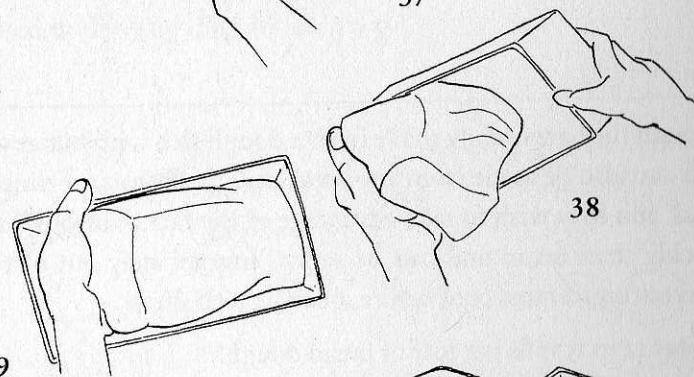


35



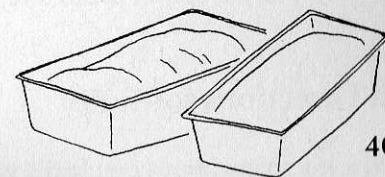
36

37



38

39



40



41

Bake at 350° for 50 to 60 minutes. (Smaller loaves will bake faster.) When done, the tops should be shiny golden brown, the sides and bottoms should also be golden brown, and the loaf will resound with a hollow thump when tapped with a finger.

Remove from pans to let the loaves cool. For clean-cut slices, let cool one hour or more before cutting.

Storing

When completely cooled, bread may be kept in a sealed plastic bag in the refrigerator. Finished bread may also be frozen and thawed for later use, with slight impairment of flavor and freshness. Somewhat stale bread may be freshened by heating in a 350° oven for 10 to 15 minutes. Dry bread can still be used for toast or French toast, croutons, or bread crumbs.

For zweiback, cut dry bread into cubes and rebake at 200° until crunchy and dry.

Rolls and Other Shapes

Though they are usually made from a dough rich with butter and eggs, rolls can also be made from any bread dough. If short for time before a meal, you may wish to take advantage of the fact that rolls bake more quickly than bread and can be served immediately out of the oven, whereas bread must cool before it can be well sliced.

Expect 12 to 15 rolls per loaf of bread dough.

General Directions for Rolls

Form into a log shape about one loaf's worth of bread dough; the log should be 1½ to 2 inches in diameter (Figure 42) and is formed by rolling the dough between your hands and the bread board.

Section the log into equal-sized pieces (Figure 43).

Shape it into a
shape.

Let rise 20 mi

Apply Egg Wa

Bake about 25

PLAIN ROL

Place the sect
sprinkled wit

CLOVER LE

Divide sectio
balls in a grea

SNAIL OR S

Roll each sec
in a greased r

42



43