

from the James Beard and IACP Award-winning author of *The Bread Baker's Apprentice*

PETER REINHART'S artisan breads every day

Fast and Easy Recipes for World-Class Breads



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PETER REINHART

photography by Leo Gong


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Where We Are and How We Got Here

For better or worse (and probably to your great relief), I am not going to rehash the extensive history of bread. It's a fine story and one worth reading, but authors like H. E. Jacobs have done that well (see the Resources section). Besides, I've already given a synopsis of the six-thousand-year history in both *Crust* and *Crumb* and Peter Reinhart's *Whole Grain Breads*. I believe what readers of this book really want to learn is how to make world-class breads quickly and easily. To accomplish this, we need only look at the discoveries and breakthroughs of recent years.

So here's a quick recap: The three waves that led to improved bread in the United States can be identified as the whole grain wave, the traditional wave, and the neo-traditional wave. The whole grain movement of the late 1960s was part of the counterculture era, in which white flour (and white sugar) symbolized industrialization and mainstream thinking, while whole grains became the symbol of a healthful, holistic way of life that had fallen by the wayside. During this period, organic foods were first promoted as an alternative to highly processed foods grown with chemical fertilizers and pesticides, ushering in what we now call the green movement. This whole grain wave introduced my generation to an alternative way of relating to food, but it took a few more years for dietary habits to change dramatically. Part of the problem was that most of the whole grain breads of that era, while nutritionally superior, weren't particularly delicious (or even palatable), so they came to be labeled "health food" breads, not fit for general consumption.

The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of the traditional wave, characterized by a culinary renaissance in which European chefs and bakers came to our shores. Likewise many Americans who exerted

considerable culinary influence traveled abroad to experience the great food traditions of other cultures.

The third movement, the neo-traditional wave, grew from the second movement as regional cuisine in the United States became the local and domestic expression of traditional European and Asian influences. Bakeries applied classic techniques to create distinctly American breads and pastries. At my bakery, Brother Juniper's, we applied slow fermentation processes to create breads using ingredients that would match well with the foods of the Sonoma County wine region or pay tribute to various other regional cuisines.

These three waves converged in the 1990s to create what is now known as the artisan bread movement. Meanwhile, many bread experts published books that shared their emerging and ever-evolving knowledge with home bakers, who were also growing in number. Bread machines helped fuel this trend, taking some of the intimidation out of the process. But more valuable, I think, was that Americans had finally experienced higher-quality breads, via restaurants and local bakeries, and they wanted to be able to replicate these breads at home. (This was also true of citizens around the world who were rediscovering their own country's bread heritage.) Every new book seemed to add yet another missing piece of the puzzle, and Internet discussion groups became abuzz with home bakers sharing their victory stories or asking for advice. Slow rise and slow food became a metaphor for better bread—and a better, more satisfying life in general. This era saw the inception of the Bread Bakers Guild of America and the international Slow Food movement, followed soon thereafter by the establishment of the Whole Grains Council and many other organizations promoting healthier, tastier, safer foods. The concept of a green lifestyle and cuisine finally spilled over into mainstream thinking, and, ironically, the best-selling bread book of recent times promised (and delivered!) artisan-quality breads faster rather than slower. The circle had closed.

Recently, I was asked to speak at a professional bakers convention on the subject of making artisan bread quickly and easily. My first reaction was that this seemed like an oxymoron. Artisanal methods aren't supposed to be easy; otherwise, everyone would already be

using them. But upon reflection, I realized that this is already happening in the industry due to modern technological breakthroughs. Refrigeration didn't exist a hundred years ago, when bakers relied upon pre-ferments to extend fermentation time. Twenty years ago, we didn't have sensitive manufacturing equipment that could handle wet, sticky dough without damaging it. Only recently have American bakers grasped the biological and chemical processes of transformation that occur during bread making, the journey from wheat to eat, though there are certainly always new mysteries waiting to be unraveled. So perhaps it isn't an oxymoron at all, and given the new methods developed by other bakers and authors, and the public interest in new, streamlined methods, the time seems right for a fresh synthesis of all of the techniques that arose in the quest for the perfect loaf and loaves.

The past few years have seen the publication of a number of bread books that offer original methods for simplifying the bread making process. Yet during the same period, a few excellent books have appeared that reveal the advanced methods of true artisan bakers from around the world. We want it all: great bread, but fast and easy. Yes, it does seem like a contradiction since the premise of artisan bread is long, slow fermentation. Despite the often complex descriptions of methodology, bread making actually isn't all that difficult, so achieving the "easy" part is, well, easy. The "fast" part is where the challenge comes in.

Baking is primarily about the balancing act between time, temperature, and ingredients. Everything else is connected to this. In my previous books, I have taken readers on a journey in search of all of the workable variations on this theme of time, temperature, and ingredients. My goal in this book is to further synthesize that knowledge and apply it in a new way to create a system of baking that anyone can understand and perform.

In the following pages, I'll explain a variety of options for everything from pre-ferments to mixing methods to fermentation. In some situations, it's clear that a certain approach is preferable to achieve the desired results. While I definitely love exploring all of the options, you need to decide what works for you when it comes to

balancing time with temperature and ingredients. What I intend to do in this book is funnel some of the newer baking methods and ideas through the structure of classic techniques and proven wisdom to broaden your sense of the options available to you. With each recipe in this book, I'll give a brief explanation of the thinking behind the method I've chosen. In some instances, I may present optional methods that require more effort or time in exchange for even better results. Many of the breads will follow the general method of a master formula, but not all of them will. Some of the formulas and techniques will seem familiar, while others may seem entirely new and perhaps unusual.

Chapter 1 explores the various methods chosen for this book, why I chose them, and what kind of results you can expect. It also includes instructions for shaping, mixing, and baking that will be useful throughout the book. Chapter 2 offers some fundamentals on working with sourdough and wild yeast. Chapters 3 through 5 apply the methods in chapters 1 and 2 to a broad range of recipes. While this book does contain some familiar recipes from my previous books, you'll also notice that I've included baked goods I've never written about before, such as Danish and croissant dough, rich coffee cake babka, and new holiday breads and crackers. Finally, in the epilogue, I'll take a look at what the artisan movement means to me.

Before moving on, though, I think it's important to remember that all of this growing interest isn't just a uniquely American bread revolution; it's occurring throughout the world, even affecting long-held French and German baking traditions and also reflected in the more recent Asian fascination with bread. The journey of discovery never seems to end. Though we've learned much about baking during the past twenty years, one of the most important lessons is that not only are there many paths to follow as we explore the realm of bread baking, but that new, unexpected trails continue to be uncovered every day. Forging one of these new paths is the task at hand—a path of fast and easy artisan bread baking. To locate it, we must look for ways to balance time, temperature, and ingredients that, somehow and against all odds, are not only easy and not only artisanal, but also fast. As you'll see in the following pages, accomplishing this means



Baking Basics

The big breakthrough for U.S. bakers during the past twenty years was a new understanding of the relationship between time, temperature, and ingredients. Long, slow fermentation was first understood as simply a technique that made better bread. Later in the evolution of bread baking, we began to understand the actual science behind the various techniques. In brief, this science comes down to biochemical and biological activities that release trapped flavors. The activities are brought about by enzymes in both the flour and the yeast, and by microorganisms (bacteria as well as yeast) that create acids, alcohol, and gases. That's actually all of the information we need in order to set out on a lifetime pursuit of applications and variations, though many books have gone much deeper in explaining dough science and are worth reading. In fact, artisan bread baking could arguably be reduced to the following axioms:

- * Use the best ingredients, including unbleached rather than bleached flour.
- * Use only as much yeast as necessary to get the job done. Slower fermentation is better than faster fermentation.
- * Mix the dough only as long as needed to get the job done to prevent oxidizing the flour, which bleaches the flour and reduces aromas and flavor.
- * Use higher rather than lower hydration levels. More water equals better oven spring and thus bigger holes and better flavor.
- * When shaping loaves, handle the dough gently in order to preserve the gases developed during the earlier fermentation cycle.
- * Bake in well-insulated ovens at the appropriate temperatures. For crusty hearth breads, hotter and faster is better than cooler, slower

baking.

* For hearth breads, large, irregular holes in the crumb of the loaf are preferable to medium, even-size holes. Larger holes allow the heat to penetrate more quickly to the center of the loaf, reducing baking time and preserving more moistness to create a thinner, crackly crust. Larger holes also indicate a better, gentler shaping technique.

Almost all of the bread books of the past twenty years speak to these points, and understanding them sets any baker well on the way to better breads. However, we are about to step beyond the boundaries of artisan orthodoxy and add some unconventional steps.

EXPLORING NEW METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

The use of old dough or pre-fermented sponges was developed by traditional bakers as a way of slowing down fermentation and, essentially, buying the dough more time to release its flavor (a result of starch molecules releasing some of their sugar and saccharide chains, as well as the formation of acids due to fermentation by yeast and bacteria). Some of these pre-ferments are wet and batterlike, while others are dry and firm; some are made with commercial yeast, while others use naturally occurring wild yeast (sourdough starters); some have salt, and some don't. What they all have in common is the idea of adding older, slowly fermented dough to young, freshly made dough to instantly age it so that greater flavor can be developed in less time. This is an example of the manipulation of time by the manipulation of ingredients.

Another way of manipulating time is by using more or less yeast, or warmer or cooler fermentation temperatures. One of the main functions of yeast is to raise, or leaven, the dough through biological fermentation, releasing carbon dioxide that gets trapped in the dough, pushing it up like a balloon. Both the amount of yeast and the temperature at which the dough ferments have a huge impact on the time it takes to raise the loaf. Typically, a difference of 17°F (about

10°C) will effectively double (or halve, depending on which direction you go) the rate of fermentation. Thus, dough that doubles in size in 2 hours at 70°F (21°C) will take 1 hour to double at 87°F (31°C) and 4 hours at 53°F (12°C). This doesn't apply to dough that's cooler than 40°F (4°C), where yeast goes somewhat dormant, or hotter than 139°F (59°C), where yeast dies.

Again, armed with just this much information, all sorts of permutations and manipulations of time become possible. Bakers from earlier baking traditions have come up with numerous variations in order to create distinctive regional breads, and within a specific tradition there may be numerous ways to achieve similar results.

Another lesson has been that in using this knowledge to produce more bread in less time by, say, increasing the yeast or boosting the fermentation temperature, we may get fully risen loaves faster, but often at the expense of flavor because the ingredients, especially the grain, haven't been given sufficient time to release their sugars and achieve their full potential. So the baker's mission, as I tell my students on their first day in my baking classes, is to learn how to draw out the full potential flavor trapped in the grain. I explain that the way to accomplish this is by understanding the effects of time and temperature on the ingredients.

All of this is a prelude to explaining the choice of methods used to make the breads in this book, many of which may seem to violate some of the axioms above. For instance, if the dough has been given sufficient time to ferment at a very cool temperature, it may be possible to increase the amount of yeast to boost leavening power and shorten rising time without sacrificing fermentation flavor. And because certain ingredients may dominate the subtle flavors that arise during long fermentation, extended fermentation time might not improve the flavor of the bread, even if the dough is held at very cool temperatures. In these instances, there's no advantage to long, delayed fermentation, but there may be ways to delay the fermentation anyway, in order to make the baker's work easier and faster on the actual day of baking.

The wild card in all of this, and the aspect of the craft that couldn't be anticipated by bakers of earlier centuries, is the invention of

refrigeration. Controlling temperature is a very powerful method of controlling time and fermentation, and it has a huge impact on the ability of the baker to evoke the full potential of flavor from the grain. The baking community has only recently begun to explore the ramifications and options of this factor in the triangle of time, temperature, and ingredients, but this exploration has already led to a number of new baking techniques using refrigerated dough. This new method of delayed fermentation creates wonderful products, even from home ovens of less-than-stellar quality.

A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF DOUGH

I figured out the new methods for the doughs in this book by experimenting and testing old methods and conventional baking wisdom against new theories. For example, when I first read the instructions for the master hearth bread recipe in a recently published book, I immediately assumed, based on my understanding of dough science, that it contained way too much yeast to work as promised. How could it possibly last in the refrigerator for even one day without overfermenting while the yeast gobbled up all of the released sugar? How could it possibly create a tasty, moist, and creamy loaf (what some describe as the custard-like quality found in great breads)? Yet, when I made the recipe, it worked and didn't overferment. Sure, I saw areas where the recipe could be tweaked and improved upon, but this didn't diminish my astonishment at how greatly it exceeded my expectations. Although I have yet to find a scientific, chemical, or biological reason to explain why it works, the results forced me to reconsider all of the premises I once held sacrosanct. While certain scientific principles govern baking, one rule supersedes all others: the flavor rule; that is, flavor rules! In other words, if it works, don't knock it.

Some of the doughs for the recipes in this book are, by design, wet and sticky, and therefore tricky to work with. But this is one of the reasons the dough springs back to life so easily and well during the final proofing stage, creating fairly large, irregular holes in the crumb. You will also find options for whole grain substitutions in many of these formulas. As a general rule, you need to increase the liquid by

about 1 tablespoon (0.5 oz / 14 g) for every 2 ounces (56.5 g) of whole grain flour you substitute in place of white flour. But even here, brands vary; you'll have to feel your way into it using the visual and tactile cues in the instructions as your guide. I've also included a selection of breads designed specifically as whole grain loaves, so in those instances you won't have to guess at adjustments.

I am indebted to the authors of other baking books using similar methods and have learned something from each. Still, there's always room for improvement. In these recipes, I've attempted to address and overcome some of the concerns I had after studying other techniques, especially to minimize overfermentation and unnecessary steps. I hope you'll find these recipes to be truly easy and consistently delicious.

What do you mean when you say the dough should be tacky but not sticky?

For some of the breads, especially rustic breads, the dough needs to be sticky to achieve a large hole structure. Sticky means that the dough sticks to a dry finger when you poke the dough. However, for the majority of the recipes in this book, tacky dough is the goal. Tacky dough behaves sort of like a Post-it note, sticking to a surface but peeling off easily. If you poke the dough with a dry finger, it should stick for a second but then peel off as you remove your finger. If the instructions call for very tacky dough, that means it borders on being sticky, so if a little dough sticks to your finger but most peels off, that's perfect. Once the dough chills in the refrigerator, it may seem less tacky or sticky because the flour and other ingredients have absorbed more of the moisture.



Unlike the recipes in my other books, many of which required a poolish or other pre-ferment (usually made with cool water and fermented for many hours, chilled or not), many of the doughs in this book are made with warm water to encourage immediate yeast activity, and then refrigerated and fermented slowly. In some of these recipes, the dough is fermented a short while at room temperature and then goes into the refrigerator for cold fermentation overnight, or longer. In many of the recipes, the dough goes into the refrigerator immediately after the mixing stage; this way the dough doesn't develop too much alcohol or lose its ability to create a rich, golden brown crust. My most well-known bagel formula, published in *The Bread Baker's Apprentice*, used a poolish sponge as part of its method. The version in this book doesn't, making these some of the easiest bagels you'll ever make, yet the results are almost identical because of the overnight method.

In some instances, though, a sourdough starter (levain, or a wild yeast type of pre-ferment) is added to create a sourdough bread. Sometimes you'll have the option of using only natural, wild yeast levain or a combination of both levain and commercial yeast. Both are legitimate methods, each resulting in a different flavor profile. Instructions for making a [wild yeast starter from scratch](#).

Laminated dough, such as that used to make croissants and Danish pastries, is made using a cold, overnight method to improve flavor and oven performance. When using the method described in this book, there's no need for a pre-ferment, since the refrigerator does all of the work of manipulating time to achieve the full potential of flavor and texture.

Because rich breads, such as babka, brioche, and holiday breads, are loaded with fats and sugars that slow down fermentation, they require a much higher amount of yeast than lean hearth breads. Again, the balancing act between time, temperature, and ingredients is what determines the method. These rich doughs generally don't benefit from the addition of a pre-ferment, but I do offer the option of adding a sourdough starter to intensify the flavor and increase shelf life and moistness.

Some of the recipes include optional methods and leave some of the choices up to you. For example, there are many options offered in the bagel recipe: They can be shaped either on the day of mixing or on the day they're baked. There are two methods of shaping. Half of my recipe testers preferred one and half preferred the other. Try them both and see which works best for you. This was also the case regarding the poaching liquid: Some testers preferred using malt syrup in the liquid and some didn't. When it comes to bagels, one of those categories of bread where many strong opinions abound, I decided it was better to lay out all of the options and let you choose for yourself, especially since there was no clear consensus or definitive winner during recipe testing. All of the options worked, and each had fans.

Is there a difference in performance between this method and methods that use a wet poolish or sponge?

Yes and no. In the hands of a master, yes, the acidity levels and leavening power of various pre-ferment methods can be slightly different. But if we distance ourselves from any loyalties to particular methods, we can see that the function of each of these pre-ferments is relatively the same: to produce a better-tasting loaf by evoking the full flavor potential trapped in the grain. While my previous books made extensive use of all of these types of pre-ferments, the recipes in this book use only one pre-ferment, sourdough starter, and even that in only a few of the recipes. Why? Because with the overnight method, the dough becomes its own pre-ferment through long, slow fermentation in the refrigerator.

Overnight Fermentation

In this book, I take advantage of a number of factors that aren't always available to commercial bakeries: refrigeration, small batches, and high hydration. For the most part, bakeries don't have enough room to hold large batches of dough overnight, so they use sponges or other pre-ferments to build flavor. But home bakers can, so most of the recipes in this book call for making a complete, single-mix dough, then using the refrigerator to retard the fermentation process. This gives enzymes and microorganisms ample time to work on the molecules in the dough and develop the flavor.

Once the dough is mixed, in most cases it's quickly retarded to slow down activity of the yeast. One of the differences between this method and those I've used in previous books is that the recipes often call for lukewarm water (about 95°F or 35°C) rather than water at room temperature. This allows the yeast a chance to wake up and begin fermenting the dough as it cools down, until the yeast eventually goes dormant when the temperature of the dough falls below 40°F (4°C). A lot of the flavor transformation in the dough takes place during the dormant stage, because the starch enzymes are still at work even while the yeast goes to sleep.

The batch sizes of the recipes in this book are large enough to make multiple loaves. This is ideal, as the unbaked dough can be held in the refrigerator for a number of days, so you only need to mix one batch to have freshly baked bread several times. Of course, if you prefer to work with smaller or larger batches, that's fine; just keep all of the ingredients in the same proportions.

Are there advantages to using a combination of pre-ferment techniques to achieve a better loaf, such as both poolish and biga, or poolish and sourdough? And what about soakers?

Sometimes yes and sometimes no, but it's hard to answer this until we factor in the third point on the triangle: time. When you really think about it, long, cold, delayed fermentation turns bread dough into its own pâte fermentée. In many instances, in fact, it may be redundant and not at all enhancing to add a pre-ferment to an overnight dough that undergoes delayed fermentation. Using a soaker, in which coarse grain is soaked overnight to induce enzyme activity and soften the grain, is an excellent method and perfectly appropriate in some recipes, but with the overnight cold fermentation in these recipes, this too is redundant because the dough serves as its own soaker, as well as its own pre-ferment. (That said, a few of the multigrain recipes still need and make good use of soakers.)

Can cold fermentation recipes be improved upon?

Yes, there's room for improvement, and this is where baking science can help. Applying the axiom of using only as much yeast as it takes to get the job done, hearth bread recipes (as well as many other yeasted breads in this book) either call for less yeast or shorten the first fermentation time in order to produce a dough that retains more of its natural residual sugars (released by the starches via enzyme activity). The result is a richer, browner crust and sweeter flavor.

A New Way to Work with Yeast

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