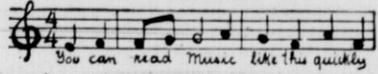


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The Country Cook

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BREAD MAKING

There is perhaps no other thing in the line of cooking in which experience counts as it does in bread making. One may give endless recipes, but the real "inside facts" have to be learned by practice. Different flours require such different treatment.

Flour made from spring wheat contains more gluten, muscle building food than can be obtained from the soft winter wheat. Most of the better grades of flour used in the West are made almost entirely from spring wheat. This "strong" flour holds more water and makes better yeast bread than the "soft" winter wheat. The latter is used almost exclusively in the South where hot breads are used daily.

A good bread flour should be a rich creamy yellow, rather coarse grained, so that it will fall apart, even after hard pressure in the hand. Old flour makes much better bread than freshly milled flour. This year when so much has been exported, much of the flour used in Canada has not been properly seasoned and is sticky and hard to handle. Bread made from fresh flour is not as white or as light as bread made from the "seasoned" product.

In giving recipes for bread the proper amount of flour and liquid to make a dough of the right consistency cannot be given either by weight or measure. The following is, however, a pretty safe rule to follow in determining the amount of liquid for any given amount of flour. When the flour and water are mixed in the right proportion the dough should be of such consistency that it can be handled without flour and will not adhere to the hands or the moulding board.

Much of the so called whole wheat flour on the market is not genuine, but is composed of white flour mixed with a goodly quantity of outside bran and some "shorts" or "middlings." This does not contain as much nourishment as the ordinary white flour. Bread made from the true whole wheat flour contains about one per cent. more protein than the bread made from ordinary flour.

The second important essential in bread making is the yeast. Compressed yeast, if one can be sure it is very fresh, is convenient and easy to work with. When compressed yeast cannot be obtained fresh it is better to use home-made yeast which can always be had fresh and vigorous.

Home Made Yeast

Pare and grate four good sized potatoes into one quart of boiling water and boil five minutes, stirring constantly. When cool, add half a cup of sugar, two table-spoonfuls of salt, and one compressed yeast cake dissolved in a half cup of cool water, or a half cup of yeast that you have saved from the previous brewing. Turn the mixture in a stone or glass jar, cover and stand in a warm place (about 68 Fahr.) for three or four hours, stirring down the mixture each time it comes to the top of the vessel. When fermentation has ceased, cover the jar closely and stand in a cool place to keep. The yeast must not be allowed to fall, it must be stirred down. Keep in a cool place and save half a cupful for the next brewing.

Another yeast recipe is: One dozen good sized potatoes, 1 pint hops, 1 teacup of sugar, 1 teacup of salt, 1 table-spoonful of ginger, 4 quarts of water and 1 cup of good yeast or two compressed yeast cakes to start it with. Keep in a jug corked tight.

Do not allow too long a time to elapse between the setting of the bread and the baking. Four or five hours is sufficient. If allowed to stand too long certain harmful ferments in the yeast begin to work and the bread is not quite as wholesome or as palatable. If the bread is made with a liquid yeast a sponge must be set over night, say at ten o'clock, and the bread mixed as early as possible in the morning. Do not add shortening to bread, it retards the action of the yeast. When the bread is baked do not wrap it in a cloth, it destroys the crispness of the crust and makes the inside heavy.

White Bread

To make white bread take 1 pint of milk, 1 compressed yeast cake, 1 pint of water, 1 level teaspoonful of salt. All water may be used instead of milk and water; the addition of the milk makes a softer bread.

Scald the milk, add the water and when lukewarm add the yeast cake dissolved and the salt; mix and add one quart of good flour, beating five minutes, then continue adding the flour until the dough is stiff enough to knead. Dust the board with flour, turn out the dough and knead until it is soft and elastic and perfectly free from stickiness. Be careful not to add too much flour at a time; it is the kneading that removes the stickiness, not the flour. The grain will be whiter and the bread whiter if you pound the dough with a good strong potato masher for five minutes or so. Put the dough in a warm place (75 Fahr.) and let it stand for three or four hours. Now turn it on the board, cut into four loaves, shape them carefully, put in the pans and leave for one hour; bake in a moderate oven. If home made yeast is used make a sponge at night and mix the bread in the morning.

Parker House Rolls

Scald one quart of sweet milk and cool until it is about milk warm. Stir in one table-spoonful of sugar and one level teaspoonful of salt and a little flour; add one cake of compressed yeast mixed with a little cold water, knead in flour until it is the consistency of bread dough. Set in a warm place to rise; when it has doubled in size put in one table-spoonful of butter, mix well and let rise again. When light roll on the board until about one half inch thick, cut with a round cutter, press the thumb across the middle and fold over like a turnover, having first brushed the edges with butter. Let rise one hour and bake.

Brown Rolls

A cook in a lumber camp gave the following recipe and it is an excellent one: Two cups of oatmeal porridge, half cup of cornmeal, half cup of Graham or whole wheat flour, half cup of molasses, salt and dripping the size of an egg.

Stir this all together, adding a little boiling water. When cool enough add one half cup of yeast and stand in a warm place until it is light. Add one half teaspoonful of soda and sufficient white flour to make a soft dough. Form into rolls and when light bake in a moderate oven. These can be baked in loaves if preferred.

Home Made Baking Powder

Have you ever tried making your own baking powder. It is very simply made and you are sure it is free from alum and other injurious substances. One pound of bi-carbonate of soda, two pounds of pure cream of tartar, ten ounces of corn-starch. Mix and sift seven or eight times. Put into cans or jars and cover tightly. There is a great deal of adulterated cream of tartar on the market, but a reliable druggist will furnish you with the pure article.

Mock Maple Syrup

A correspondent wants to know how to make syrup of sugar cane. The following is an excellent mock maple syrup: Two cups of brown sugar, two cups of boiling water, 1 cup of granulated sugar, two teaspoonfuls of butter and one teaspoonful of vanilla.

Boil the brown sugar and water for ten minutes, melt the granulated sugar to a light brown, add the syrup to this, stirring all the time. Remove from the fire and add the butter and vanilla. This is good to eat with griddle cakes. In making griddle cakes try using half bread crumbs instead of all flour; it uses up bits of stale bread and the griddle cakes are better than those made with flour alone.

Wheat or Graham Muffins

One cup of sour milk, one and a half cups of flour, one half teaspoonful of salt and one half table-spoonful of melted butter. Take out two table-spoonfuls of the flour and add the soda to it. Put the salt in the milk, add one half the flour and stir until smooth; add the rest a little at a time, beating until smooth. Lastly, put in the flour with the soda in it and the melted butter. Bake in a hot oven.

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