

Richard Bertinet

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Good dough makes good bread. It is as simple as that.



The Magic of Baking

I've been baking bread for over forty years, and yet I have never lost that sense of wonder at the magical transformation of a few simple ingredients – essentially flour, yeast, salt and water – into a beautiful, airy and responsive dough through the power of fermentation. The process is as old as time, and it connects people all over the world, but also it is never complete. There is always something new to learn, and every dough you make has its own character. I will never tire of making my own bread and experimenting with different flours and flavours, and I hope that this course will inspire you in the same way.

When I was twelve or thirteen my schoolteacher put up a list of jobs on the blackboard and asked the class what we wanted to do when we were older. While some of the intellectuals were going for the options of lawyers and doctors, I said I wanted to be a baker. I always knew I would be happiest working with my hands as I struggled to concentrate on more academic subjects in class – it wasn't until decades later that I realised that this was down to being dyslexic. No one seemed to know anything about such things at the time, and I am sure my teachers would be amused to know that these days I have my own school and have written six books!

Of course baking was already in my blood, as my uncle had a big *boulangerie* in Paris and my mother had also worked in a bakery. I loved the shapes and colours and aromas of the breads and patisserie in the *boulangerie* near to my home in Brittany. As in most families, bread was on the table at every meal time, and at the weekends, when I would be sent to collect the loaves for the day, the queue was always longer so I had more time to take everything in. Sometimes while I was peering over the counter the door to the bakery would open and I could catch a glimpse of the men in their t-shirts, covered in flour, taking the bread out of the massive ovens. On one occasion one of the bakers came out, carrying a huge trayful of breads into the bakery and I remember clearly the look of pride on his face.

As soon as I was old enough at fourteen, I started my apprenticeship. I would alternately spend two weeks in the bakery, then two weeks at college, and every weekend in the bakery. It was very hard, working through the night, but from the moment I started I fell in love with the whole process of making bread. There is a magical moment in a bakery – usually around four in the morning, when all the bread has been unloaded from the ovens and everything is silent and still, except for the sound of the freshly baked loaves 'singing' on their racks as they begin to cool down and their crusts crackle. If you listen, when you take a batch of crusty bread from your oven, you will hear it for yourself.

The Bertinet Kitchen

When I first arrived in Britain in 1988 I was shocked at how hard it was to find anything other than sliced white bread in most shops. Even at the turn of this millennium, 80 percent of the bread that people were buying was of the industrially made, sliced, wrapped variety. How that has changed! In the last twenty years there has been a complete bread revolution and an explosion of artisan bakeries and home baking. Now it seems everyone I meet wants to make sourdough.

Things were very different in 2005 when my wife Jo and I decided to leave London, where I was working as a consultant to some commercial bakeries, to move to Bath with our children, and set up a baking and cooking school. At the same time I published my first book, *Dough*. My aim in that book, and through my classes, was just to introduce people to the simple joy of transforming flour, water, yeast and salt into a beautiful, bouncy dough, which would result in bread that was a world away from the over-processed loaves that were filling the supermarket shelves. I think that, from the moment I saw my first sliced loaf in a bag, I had the idea at the back of my mind that if people wanted sliced loaves there had to be a better way to satisfy that demand, but with simple, good quality ingredients and nothing else added. And I am very proud that we achieved that when we opened the Bertinet Bakery in 2008, which became the UK's first national artisan bakery with a range of breads in the supermarket aisles, including sliced sourdough.

At the time that I started teaching there was an idea that making bread at home was far too complicated and daunting for most people with busy lives. I just wanted to show people how simple it is to make beautiful bread from a few honest ingredients, and spread the message that baking is for everyone.

Above all, I wanted to teach people my technique. When I first came to Britain I didn't understand the concept of 'kneading' the dough and 'knocking it back'. To me that seemed to be all about bashing the air out of it, whereas what I want to do is the opposite. I want to introduce as much air into my dough as possible, and then treat it gently, to retain that air, so that I end up with a dough that is soft, pillowy and full of life. So 'kneading' and 'knocking back' are words you will never hear me say.

I didn't invent the technique. It has its roots in France in the 1700s. Up to that point, bread was seen as something that must be substantial to fill people up, but it was heavy and dense, and very hard to digest. When the communal village bakehouses evolved into bakeries, the 'dough makers' might have to pound 120 kilos of stiff dough in a big trough, so they had to be physically strong, and they were known as *les geindres* (the moaners) as you could hear them grunting and groaning away at night as they worked.

Then, in the late 1700s, thanks to the French scientist, Antoine-Augustin Parmentier, a new technique was developed to introduce more air and water into the dough, which would make it lighter and more supple. Not only that, but it expanded, so it could make bigger breads to feed more people, and the bread would be lighter on the stomach.

The new method began with the mixing or blending of the ingredients, including more water than previously (*le frasage*), then the mixture would be briefly shaped (*le pâtonage*), and lumps cut off (*le découpage*). These would be lifted and thrown from one side of the trough to the other to build strength into the dough (this was called *le passage en tête*). Finally came the real revolutionary movement: the stretching of the dough (*l'étirage*), followed by *le soufflage*: the arcing of the dough over itself to trap air inside. *Voilà*: light, airy dough, which at first customers objected to, thinking the bakers were cheating them by charging for bread full of air!

Of course once electricity came along and mechanical mixers began to be introduced, these movements could be achieved in a similar way, just as today.

This method of introducing more water and air to create a soft dough is something I developed in my own baking over the years, and when I began teaching I reinterpreted it again, to make it easy to work with smaller quantities at home.

The people who come to my classes might be complete beginners, or people who have been attempting to make bread for years, but have been disappointed with the results, even professional bakers who are so used to working with big commercial mixers that they feel they have lost touch with the feel of the dough in their hands.

There is something for everybody. I never anticipated that teaching people how to make bread would be so rewarding, or that I would receive so many messages, either from novices brimming with pride at filling their freezers with their first batch of bread, or more experienced bakers discovering that they can make bread that is lighter, crustier and more satisfying than anything they have made before.

I hope that by the end of this course, whether you are starting out, looking to improve your baking, or discover some new ideas, you will feel just as inspired.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rick', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

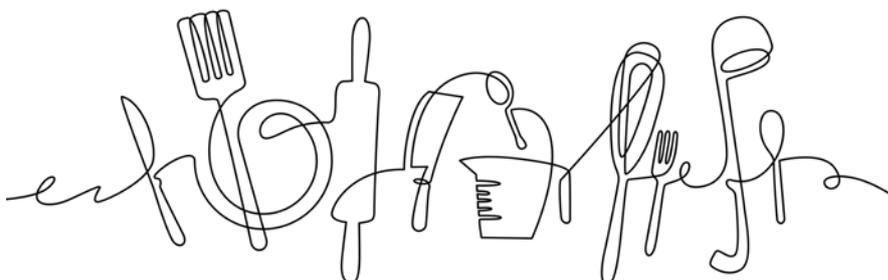


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Every dough you make
has its own character.

The Lessons

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1. Introduction

How To Use The Course

Good dough makes good bread. It is as simple as that.

I often compare breadmaking to architecture. You can design a beautiful building but if the foundations are wrong, it will collapse.

Think of the dough as the foundation on which you can build many different styles of bread – if you take the time to make sure it is strong and well made, there is no limit to what you can achieve, but if you cut corners for the sake of speed, the structure of your bread may suffer.

So, the first thing I always teach people when they come to my classes is how to master the basics of mixing and working the dough by hand using the technique that I have developed over the years.

When I started out as an apprentice, my boss explained to me that before I could use one of the huge mixers I must learn to make the dough by hand, so that I could feel it responding and begin to understand the way it behaved and changed during the various stages of making bread. Machines, he said, were invented to mimic hands, and only when you understood what your hands were doing would you know what to ask the machine to do.

Of course, once you get into the swing of baking, especially if you are making bread every few days, it is quicker and easier to use a mixer, but learn to feel and understand the way the dough responds beneath your fingers first. Then when you use a mixer, you will recognise when your dough has reached that stage of feeling bouncy and full of life that you experience when you make it by hand.

I once had a blind man come along to my classes and watching him work was quite magical. He could handle the dough so easily because, he told me, he was “seeing” through his fingers. Touch is so important, and that really inspired me, so now if I see someone looking too tense with concentration in my class, I will often say, “Look out of the window, don’t look at the dough; just let your body relax and get used to the feel of the dough”.

So in Lesson 2, I will show you how to make your dough by hand up to the point of letting it rest and expand in the bowl.

In Lesson 3, I will take you through the steps of using the dough to make a simple tin loaf, or shape it and bake it loose on a hot stone or baking tray in the oven. If you like, you can have a bit of fun with it and make Leopard Bread – my variation on Tiger Bread!

Then, in Lesson 4, I will show you how to make baguettes – but this time I will take you through the process of mixing the dough using a machine, to mimic your hands, and also introduce you to a simple ferment, which will add a depth of flavour and texture to your bread.

The lessons that follow will introduce you to different styles of dough and a variety of flours and ferments, but always building on what you have learned in the first four lessons.

Of course the ultimate bread built on a ferment is sourdough, which is the one that everyone wants to make. I know you may not be able to resist plunging straight in at Lesson 18, but if you are new to baking, I suggest you build up your confidence by perfecting the various breadmaking techniques first. Good baking is all about repetition and consistency. Just like taking up a new sport or a musical instrument, breadmaking is a skill that comes with practice, patience, and accepting that you are bound to make a few mistakes – but learning from them is the way to build your understanding and experience. When you feel comfortable and at one with your baking, then is the time to move on to sourdough.

Tools

What do you need to make good bread? I always say the three most important things are your hands, your senses and patience!

Your hands, because my technique is all about feeling the dough and the way it responds. Once you have mastered this you can move on to using a mixer with confidence, because you will be able to recognise when your dough is ready to be turned out of the mixing bowl.

Your senses, because once you understand the techniques and begin to make bread regularly, you will learn to use your senses to make judgements about when your dough has rested enough or proved enough; and you will gain the confidence to adapt and make little adjustments, according to whether your kitchen is slightly colder in winter or warmer in summer.

And patience, because you can't rush dough. Good bread relies on time for the yeast to get to work and for the dough to ferment slowly as it goes through the processes of resting and proving, so that your bread not only has a great texture and crust, but is digestible. Remember, good dough makes good bread. It's that simple.

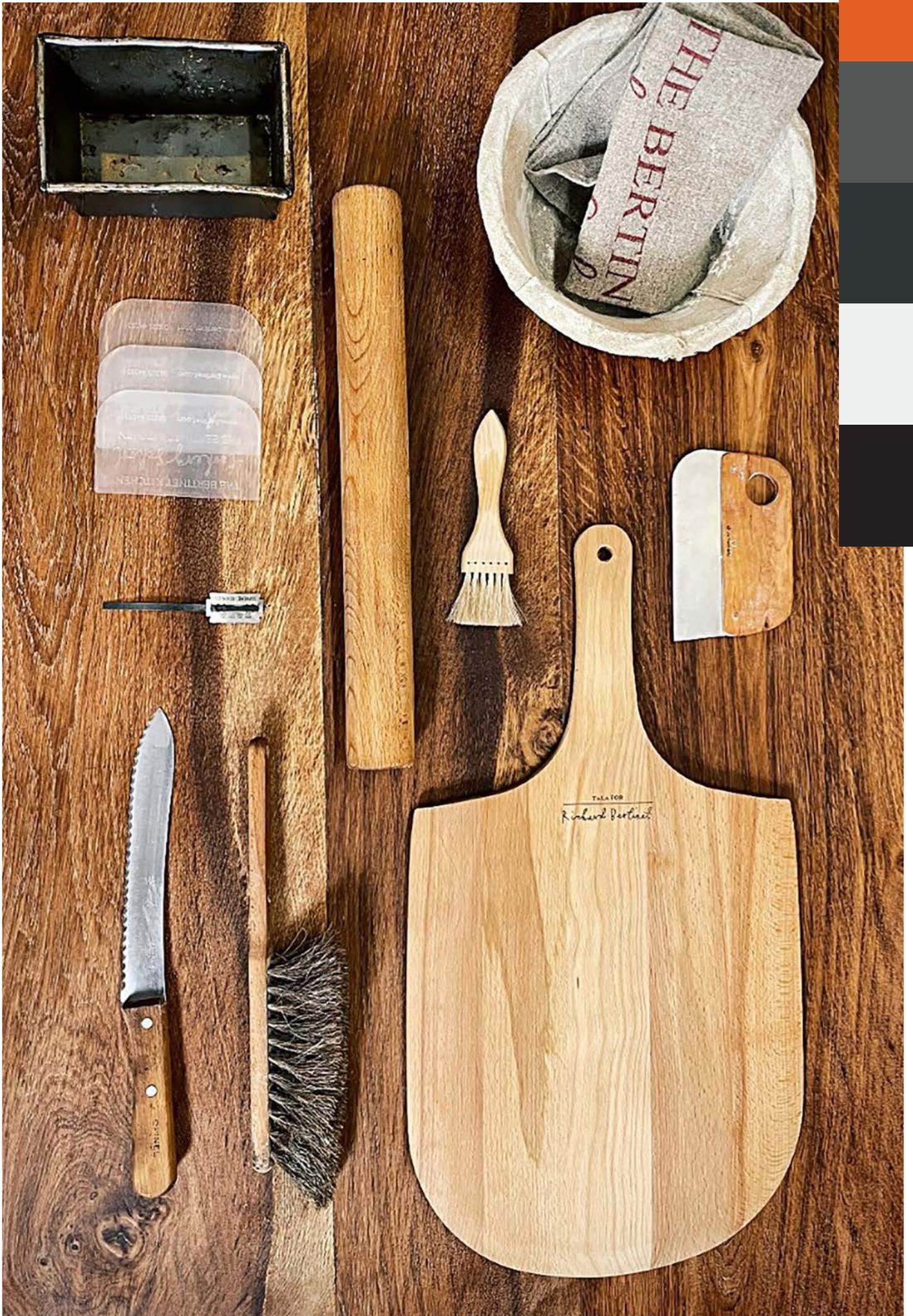
So you don't need a kitchen full of expensive gadgets to make beautiful bread, just a few tools – most of them inexpensive – which will quickly become your best friends.

These are the ones I wouldn't be without:

ELECTRONIC WEIGHING SCALES/MEASURING JUG

When you are cooking you might add a dash of this or that ingredient to your dish as the whim takes you, without bothering to measure how much you are putting in, but with baking you have to be much more precise. For that reason I weigh all my ingredients, including my water, in my measuring jug, and give the quantity in grams, as this is more accurate than just judging the level.

You also need scales when dividing your dough to make several loaves, baguettes, or rolls, as it is important that each piece of shaped dough proves and then bakes consistently.



STAINLESS STEEL MIXING BOWL

You don't have to use stainless steel of course, but it is my favourite, as it is unbreakable (the golden rule in a bakery is never use anything breakable, especially glass, as if anything should shatter near the dough, you have to discard everything and start all over again!). And stainless steel is light – earthenware bowls look very attractive, but they are quite cumbersome and heavy, even when they are not full of dough! Choose a bowl big enough to hold a kilo of dough comfortably – a 5 litre one is perfect.

SCRAPERS

These are my least expensive, but most valuable, tools. Think of your plastic scrapers as extensions of your hands. You will use them for every stage of the breadmaking process: to help you mix the dough, then turn it out of your bowl and skim it into shape, and to divide it and then scrape up any pieces of dough that cling to your work surface as you go along. A little like your most comfortable pair of shoes your scrapers should fit easily in your hand, without being too big. They should be firm enough to scrape your dough cleanly from around the edges of your bowl, but flexible enough for you to bend in your hand. It's handy to keep a few scrapers in your car in winter too, for clearing ice from the windscreen!

BAKING CLOTHS

These are heavier than tea towels and made of natural linen, which won't stick to the dough. Again, it is worth investing in several of these as you will use them constantly, to cover your bowl of dough as it rests, or to line baking trays and then cover shaped dough as it proves. I never wash my cloths, I just shake or brush them down well and roll them up after each baking session.

EXTRA LARGE FREEZER BAGS

If you are resting dough in a bowl overnight in the fridge, it is best to cover it with an extra large freezer bag, split, if necessary, so that it will go over the top loosely – this will keep the dough cosy and help to keep the surface from drying out. Even if you are resting the dough at room temperature covered with a baking cloth, if there is a draught in your kitchen, an extra large freezer bag over the top, as an additional layer, can help.

BAKERS' COUCHE

The word couche is French for a layer – it is also the word for a nappy! In this case it is a stiffer, thicker linen cloth, which is not essential, but useful if you are baking baguettes, as it allows you to pleat it to keep your baguettes in separate, cosy compartments as they prove.

LAME

This is the handle, fitted with a razor blade, which is used to slash the tops of baguettes, sourdoughs and other loaves, to control the point where the expanding gas inside the dough escapes, breaking through to create a characteristic crunchy 'burst' in the crust. If you don't make these slashes, the crust will most likely burst out at the sides, which spoils the look of the bread.

Bakers often use their lames like pens, to create more dramatic marks in the tops of more rustic breads such as sourdoughs. It is like carving the signature of your bakery into the crust, and in fact in France the practice dates back to the times when very few families had ovens, and so they would make their dough and take it to the local boulanger who would bake it for them. So that the breads didn't get mixed up, each family would carve their initials or a particular pattern or crest into the top. You can find all sorts of lames, some plain, some decorative, but the important thing is to find one that fits comfortably in your hand. I have had mine for many, many years and wouldn't want to swap it.

If you don't have a lame, you can use a light, serrated-edge baker's knife – the important thing, as with the lame, is to make the cuts cleanly, and not to drag the dough when you use it. You can also create quite stunning effects by snipping into the dough with scissors.

WOODEN PEELS

These are flat wooden panels with long handles that are used to slide loaves in and out of the oven. You can buy them in all shapes, including long ones for baguettes, or make your own with some pieces of plywood – just make sure they are longer than you need for your bread, so that you can get a good grip.

A MIXER WITH A DOUGH HOOK

Making dough by hand is very satisfying but once you understand how to do it and have learned the basics of using a mixer to mimic the process, it is often easier and quicker to make your dough in a machine, especially if you are making bread on a regular basis.

PLASTIC CONTAINERS

Once you start making ferments for sourdoughs, it is useful to have a small collection of these. Again, never store ferments in glass – just in case it shatters and you have to start your fermentation process again.

BAKING STONE

A ceramic baking or pizza stone acts like the hot brick floor of a baker's oven. If you want to use both shelves of your oven you will need two, otherwise bake in batches. You don't have to have these – a good alternative is a couple of heavy baking trays, turned upside down to give a solid, flat surface – but the stones are nice to have. A granite chopping board will do the job very well, or even an offcut, but make sure you have measured the inside of your oven before you shop! Whatever you do, don't use marble – it is too fragile and will explode in the heat.

The stones will take a while to heat up, so make sure you put them in a good hour before you want to bake. 100°C is fine, and will give the stones a head start before you turn the heat up to the correct temperature for your bread. If you bake regularly you can leave your stones permanently in your oven, so you don't even have to remember to put them in early enough.



WATER SPRAY

Using a water spray to mist inside the oven as you put in your loaves helps to recreate the humidity and steam which is automatically introduced into a professional baker's oven using a 'damper' system. You can purchase gallon, or smaller, water sprays very inexpensively from DIY stores and garden centres – just make sure to give them a good wash before using them!

SMALL SOFT BRUSH

Again this is not an essential, but I use my little brush all the time for sweeping the flour from my work surface after I have used my scraper to remove any pieces of dough. I never wash my work surface until I have finished the breadmaking for the day, as the water turns any flour or scraps of dough to glue.

PASTRY BRUSH

For glazing breads, usually with egg-wash.

ROLLING PIN

Sometimes you need to roll out the dough really thinly, as for Sourdough Crackers (Lesson 22).

Beyond these tools, it is really up to you. You might want to buy some different sizes of tins, or, as you begin working with more rustic loaves and sourdoughs, you might like to build up a collection of wicker, linen-lined proving baskets. Unlined baskets can also be fun, as the wicker will leave an imprint in your dough as it proves, giving your finished bread a particular, distinctive look.

Ingredients

FLOUR

In the UK wheat flour is graded according to its strength, which is derived from the level of protein (this produces the gluten which enables bread to rise).

Plain flour has the lowest protein so is normally used for cake-making, sauces etc. Next comes strong white bread flour, which is what I use in all my recipes. You can also find 'extra strong' and 'very strong' bread flour. Don't be tempted to substitute one of these for the strong white bread flour in the recipes that follow, thinking it will make your dough rise better, because these flours require a higher quantity of water, otherwise too much gluten will be formed and your bread may be harder to digest.

The more you bake and gain experience, you will want to experiment with different flours, such as rye, spelt, wholemeal... all of which have their own characters and behave differently. I am always being asked for gluten-free recipes, and while you can't make a baguette or a sourdough without strong white bread flour, you can make amazing flatbreads using flours milled from buckwheat (which we use a lot in my native Brittany), corn and pulses, such as marrowfat peas and chickpeas.

In most of the recipes you will need a little extra flour for dusting... this can be more strong white bread flour, or plain flour. Either is fine.

YEAST

I always like to use fresh yeast, but if you don't have any, don't let that stop you making bread, as you can substitute dried in all the doughs and ferments in this course, however dried yeast tends to be stronger acting, so you need to use slightly less than a recipe states. As a general rule, 7g of dried yeast is equivalent to 10g of fresh yeast, but always read the information on the packet to check whether you have 'normal' or fast-acting yeast. If the instruction is to use one sachet (usually 7g) for 500g of flour, then it is best to do that!

SEA SALT

Salt is so often demonised, it is easy to forget that a certain amount is important to the body in terms of regulating hydration, controlling blood pressure and other functions. The key is not to overuse it and avoid too many processed foods which have a 'hidden' salt content. In breadmaking salt improves the colour and increases the depth of flavour of your bread, helps develop the crust and contributes to keeping the bread fresher for longer.

I always use natural sea salt, which is very different from 'table salt' as this goes through a refining process, may have anti-caking chemicals added, and has a more aggressive taste. Naturally I particularly like the grey Guérande sea salt from Brittany, but you can find beautiful artisan sea salt harvested from the waters all around the UK and beyond.

WATER

Baking books and articles use all kinds of terminologies to describe the right temperature of water for mixing dough, but the way I explain it in my classes is to say: when you make dough by hand, you want water that, if you were to dip your fingers into it, you would describe as neither hot nor cold, but just neutral. I amuse my classes by calling this just 'wet water'.

When you make your dough in a mixer, however, you should use cool water to counteract the heat generated by the machine as it works hard to mix the ingredients. You don't want the dough to overheat as it will lose some of its texture and be overly sticky to handle.

I always weigh my water, which is much more accurate than judging the level in a measuring jug – I just put the empty jug on the scales and then add the water.

OIL, EGGS AND BUTTER

In some of the Italian doughs in this course, I use olive oil. It just needs to be good oil, but not necessarily the finest extra virgin olive oil – keep that for dipping your bread into when it is made. Other oils, such as rapeseed or avocado, also work well.

Some of the sweeter doughs in the course are enriched with eggs and butter. Unless otherwise stated in a particular recipe, I use medium eggs that weigh around 60-65g, but don't stress if one of your eggs is a little bigger than another. I always say that unless you are talking about substituting a tiny quail's egg or a massive ostrich egg, the difference a little more or less egg will make to your dough is marginal – but again as you gather more experience, you will get used to making little adjustments in your baking if necessary.

For preference I like harder, pale butter – what we used to call 'winter butter' in northern France, when the milk came from cows fed on straw in barns – as opposed to the more yellow, greasy butter made with milk from cows which have been outside eating grass all summer.

I also prefer to use butter cold from the fridge and soften it by putting it between two sheets of greaseproof paper and bashing it with a rolling pin, rather than leaving it out to soften at room temperature.

Notes

FERMENTS

Throughout this course I will introduce you to various different ferments. Think of a ferment as scaffolding for your dough which will add structure and strength as well as a depth of flavour to your finished bread.

There are all sorts of different names you might hear: starter, *biga* (which is the Italian term), mother... but they are all essentially the same thing, and there is nothing complicated or mysterious about them. The simplest ferment can just be flour and water mixed together with a little yeast – you can use different flours, or substitute water for beer – which will be ready to use in a matter of hours. Some are left overnight, or in the case of sourdough, natural yeasts are developed over several days.

RESTING & PROVING

I like to keep things simple, so I just use two terms – resting and proving – to cover the stages of letting the dough rise. Once you have mixed the dough and worked it into a smooth ball, it needs to rest for the length of time suggested in each recipe. After this, you can divide and shape it into loaves, baguettes, tins, buns, or whatever you plan to bake, and then these need to be left to prove before baking.

The purpose of both resting and proving is ultimately to give the dough time to develop and mature. Remember good dough makes good bread, and good dough requires time.

WHERE TO REST AND PROVE YOUR DOUGH?

Somewhere 'cosy' is what I always say, as I think that description resonates with people more than specifying a temperature (though 22-24°C in a draught-free place is ideal). Since our houses tend to be warmer than in the past, there is usually no need to seek out airing cupboards or other special places (apparently at one time before central heating, a favourite warm place to put a bowl of dough to rise was in bed, where it would be nice and comfortable under the eiderdown!). If you have a warm kitchen and you cover your bowl of dough or shaped bread with a big linen baking cloth it should be equally cosy. If you have a breeze coming through an open window, or if you are concerned about other draughts, which can cause a skin to form on the top of the dough, then put an extra large freezer bag over the top of the cloth and bowl – just as you would put on an extra layer of clothing if you felt a chill.

HOW LONG TO REST AND PROVE?

Temperature and time go together, so if your kitchen is a little cooler than usual, then resting and proving will take a little longer, or if the room is a little warmer, these processes will happen a bit quicker. I would love to say that the times suggested in the lessons are foolproof, but that is impossible, so treat these times as a guide and keep checking for yourself, so that you learn to use your instincts and make little adjustments according to the weather or the time of year.

The standard phrase you will see in books and magazines in terms of allowing the dough to rise is 'until double in volume', however it is always better to underrest and underprove, rather than overdo it, which can cause the dough to lose its domed top, wrinkle and then deflate like a balloon. So I always suggest resting and proving until 'just under' double in volume, at least until you become more experienced and confident enough to trust your senses. I realise that it is not always easy to judge how much dough has risen, but I find that suggesting 'just under double' alerts people to keep an eye on how the dough is doing and err on the side of caution. In my classes I encourage people to check every 30 minutes, which is what I always do myself. I touch the top of my dough with my fingertips and then with the back of my hand, as if checking a child's forehead to see if they have a temperature. If the dough is domed, firm and bounces back if I press it lightly with my fingertips, and if it doesn't feel warm, then usually all will be well. Like a farmer knowing when to harvest his crops, or a winemaker knowing when to pick his grapes, as you bake more, you will learn to know when your dough looks and feels just right.

And if you are worried about the dough developing too fast, you can always slow things right down by putting it in the fridge overnight, rather than leaving it out for the length of time suggested in the recipes. Just make sure it is covered with an extra large freezer bag, to prevent that skin from forming on top.

OVENS

All the oven temperatures I have given in the course are for a fan oven, but it is important to remember that no two ovens are exactly the same, and only you know how yours behaves in terms of how long it takes to heat up, whether it has any 'hot spots' etc. So treat the timings and temperatures that I have given in each of the lessons as a guide rather than gospel. Don't think your work is done once your bread goes into the oven; you still need to use your senses and judgement to make adjustments if necessary. I know how easy it is to get distracted by a phone call, or one of the kids needing something, so as well as setting an actual timer, try to have a timer in your head and keep checking your bread, from just before halfway through the expected baking time, and every few minutes towards the end.

Make sure you preheat your oven well in advance of baking, and if you are going to be baking directly onto baking stones, or upturned baking trays, these need to be good and hot too. Pre heat your oven to 230°C, but if it will go up to 240°C or 250°C that is even better. Small breads and baguettes that only need a short time in the oven will benefit from the high heat, but this will be a bit too fierce for bigger loaves and they might burn before they are properly baked inside, so you will see that in the recipes for larger loaves I recommend turning the temperature down to around 210°C after the first 10 minutes or so.

It might sound obvious, but try to open and shut your oven door as quickly as possible when loading your bread, especially if you are misting the oven with a water spray. The initial surge of heat is needed to seal the base of the bread and to help form a beautiful crust... so you don't want to lose it.

EGG GLAZE

Some of the breads and buns that are enriched with ingredients such as butter, eggs, milk, honey or sugar, are also finished with a glaze of egg, beaten with a pinch of fine sea salt. As an apprentice I was taught to prepare the glaze a good hour before using, as the salt 'burns' the egg, turning it a deep, rich apricot colour. We would have to glaze hundreds of croissants every morning, and the boss would always say 'caress the dough', i.e. brush on the glaze gently, in two thin coats, rather than daubing on a thick layer, which will drip everywhere. Once baked the glaze will give a shiny, chestnut-coloured gleam to your breads and buns – just remember if you are using an egg glaze, don't use steam in your oven, or the misting of water will ruin this finish.

A man with glasses and a blue shirt stands in a rustic bakery kitchen. He is surrounded by wooden shelves filled with bread, a large wooden paddle, and various baking ingredients like flour, herbs, and olives on a stone surface in the foreground. A quote is overlaid on the image.

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Good baking is all about repetition and consistency.

2. The Dough

To make a simple dough all you need is four ingredients: flour, water, yeast and salt.

The first stage is to mix these ingredients together really well until it looks like a sticky porridge, and the next stage, which is where my technique comes in, is to transform this into a dough that is silky, elastic and full of air.

INGREDIENTS

1kg strong white bread flour,
plus a little extra for dusting

700g water

20g fresh yeast

20g fine sea salt

I remember my first morning as an apprentice. I was so excited, but when the boss gave me a huge sticky mass of dough to work with, without adding any flour, I was completely overwhelmed. How was I going to turn this thick porridge into the kind of airy, bouncy balls of dough that I could see all around me? But he told me, 'Il faut maitriser la pate', which, roughly translated, means, 'show the dough who's boss'. In other words, don't be scared; take control. I have never forgotten that, and 'show the dough who's boss' has become the mantra that people take away from my breadmaking classes.

Most people I teach have been brought up with breadmaking terms like 'kneading' and 'knocking back', but I don't use any of these words, as to me the idea of kneading and pummelling implies knocking out the air, when I want to treat my dough more gently, stretching and folding it to incorporate as much air as possible.

I remember a potter came to one of my classes, and he told me that the first thing you do with clay is to knead it in order to push the air out. As soon as he said that everyone in the class understood that this is the opposite of what you want to do with dough.

It will take a bit of practice to get used to my technique, but once you do you will be amazed how easily you can transform the sticky mass from your bowl into wonderful, bouncy dough that feels alive beneath your fingers.

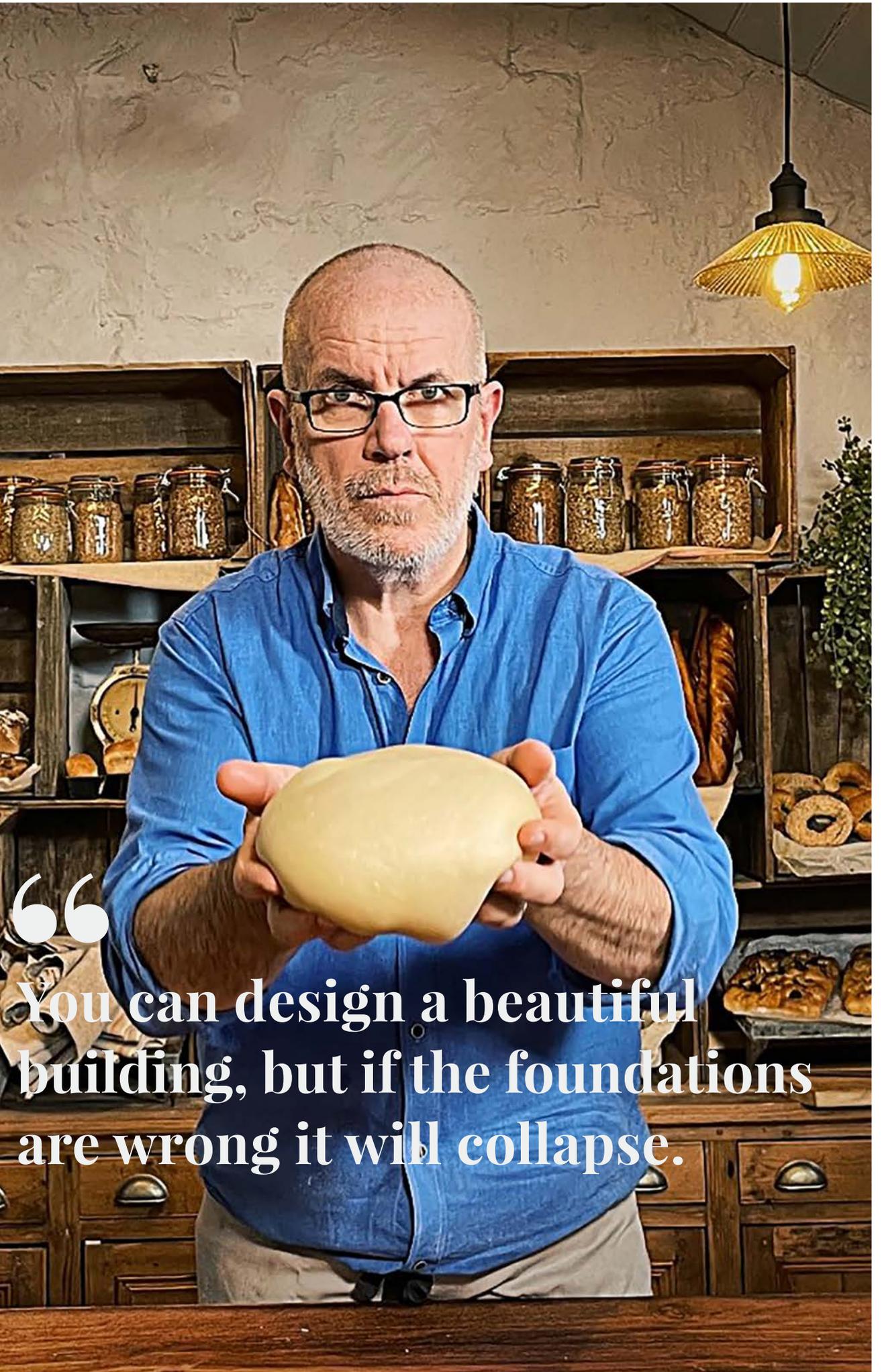
One of the things I always say to people when they begin baking is 'use your head before your hands'. Familiarise yourself with the technique and run through it in your head, before you plunge in. That way you won't find yourself with your hands inside 'gloves' of sticky dough as you stop and try to remember what it is you are supposed to be doing next. So I suggest you watch the video of this lesson a few times before you start.

Don't forget to weigh your water, as it is more accurate. It just needs to be at a neutral temperature: neither warm nor cold

TO MAKE THE DOUGH

This is what I call my foundation dough: simple white dough, made with strong white bread flour, which you can shape and bake as you like. As I always say, baking is all about consistency, and if you stick to these quantities, I know that this dough will work for you. If you were to use any other flour, for example 'very strong' bread flour, then you would need to adjust the quantity of water – so it is best to save experimenting with different flours until you have built up some experience and confidence.

You might think that this is a lot of dough – it is enough to make four loaves in the next lesson – but I think it is better to work with a larger quantity which will also give you more opportunity to get used to the various techniques. You can always give a loaf or two away to friends, or freeze some of them.



“You can design a beautiful building, but if the foundations are wrong it will collapse.”

Have the flour in your mixing bowl, then take the yeast, cover it in a little of the flour from your bowl and then rub it between the palms of your hands, as if you were washing them, so that the yeast crumbles into the flour.

Now add your salt. It is important to keep the yeast and salt apart until the yeast is mixed in, as the salt can suck the moisture from the yeast and 'kill' it.

Add the water – don't be scared to pour it all in in one go.

Mix well, using the rounded end of your scraper with your right hand (if you are right handed) in a clockwise direction, and with your left hand turn the bowl in the opposite direction until the dough starts to form and you can use the scraper to mix right down to the bottom of the bowl. Be patient and don't rush this stage as this blending of the ingredients is very important. As the dough all starts to come together you can begin to work it a bit more energetically.

A good tip here is to adjust the way you stand behind your work surface. When you work all night in a bakery, believe me, you learn how to save your body from aches and pains! So stand with one foot forward as you mix, and let the power come from your legs and your core. If you stand with your feet side by side, the chances are the shoulder of the hand you are mixing with will hunch upwards, and after a while it will begin to ache.

Once all the ingredients are well blended, with no water or flour still showing around the bowl, and your dough looks like sticky porridge, use your scraper to release the dough cleanly from the bowl and turn it out onto your work surface without flouring it first.

I know your natural instinct will be to cover your hands and your surface with flour in order to counteract the stickiness of the dough, but resist the urge, as you could easily end up adding several hundred grams more flour to the mix without even realizing it, which will cause the dough to stiffen up instead of becoming supple and elastic.

Instead, relax and trust in my technique.

The first step is to slide the flat side of your scraper underneath your dough and use it to gently skim or move the dough over your work surface. I call this 'walking the dough' because you need to move up and down as you do so (the video will help you understand what I mean).

You will see the dough very quickly begins to form a distinct 'top' and a 'bottom' – the top will be smooth and shiny and the bottom underneath will still be sticky, so don't flip the dough over as if you skim, or you will bring all that stickiness to the surface.

Now you are ready to start stretching and arcing the dough over itself to introduce more air into it. It is important to get your whole body behind the movement, not just your arms. Again, by standing correctly you channel the power through your legs and core, so you can work with big quantities of dough, without tiring.

Stand a little away from your bench/table with one foot forward. Shift your weight onto your front foot and, with your arms bent at the elbows as if you were pretending to be a gorilla, slide your fingers under the dough, scoop it up and in one movement, turn your hands towards you, so that the dough swings, then slap it down 'tail first' onto the work surface. As you do this, rock your weight onto your back foot.

Now stretch the dough upwards and outwards, then forwards, arcing it over itself like a wave, rocking your weight onto your front foot as you do so.

Repeat this whole sequence four or five times and then skim the dough again, as above, before going back to the stretching and arcing sequence another four or five times.

Continue stretching and arcing, then skimming, and stretching and arcing again. You will see the dough forming and gaining strength. This is when the magic happens. Air pockets form and the dough will become light, silky and pillowy, but strong enough to come away cleanly from your hands.

It may take a bit of practice, but after a while you will get into a continuous rhythm – and if, at any time, you are struggling with the technique and need to regain control, go back to skimming the dough and you will be back on track. The beauty of this technique is that it is very difficult to overwork the dough.

Finish off with one final skim and a few ‘quarter turns’, i.e., stretch and arc your dough over itself, then turn it clockwise through 45 degrees and repeat the stretching and arcing. Repeat 3 or 4 more times (again this will be easier to follow on the video). It is good to perfect this technique, as once you start using a mixer, you can use it to finish off the dough on your work surface after it has come out of the bowl.

Finally you need to form the dough into a ball. At this stage you can lightly flour the work surface – but I do mean lightly; just a dusting. Remember you want to add as little flour to the dough as possible.

Turn the dough over, so the ‘bottom’ (the sticky side) is upwards and fold each ‘corner’ into the centre in turn, pressing down lightly with your thumb as you do so.

Turn the dough back over, so the smooth ‘top’ is back facing upwards again.

Lightly flour your mixing bowl, put the dough back in (with the ‘top’ facing upwards), cover with a baking cloth and leave for around 1-1½ hours somewhere cosy, until just under double in volume, bouncy and full of air pockets. If your kitchen is draughty you can put an extra large freezer bag over the top of the baking cloth, just for some extra protection.

So that’s it, your first lesson is complete, your dough is made, and in the next lesson I will show you how to use the risen dough to make a simple tin loaf, or shape it and bake it on a tray.

“

**‘Kneading’ and ‘knocking back’
are words you’ll never hear me say.**

3. Tin Loaf & Leopard Bread

In this lesson I will show you how to divide, shape, prove and bake the rested dough from Lesson 2.

The quantity of dough will make 4 loaves of around 450g each, which you can bake in tins, or loose. For the loose ones, I will also show you how to make an optional paste which works like a crackle-glaze over the top of the bread. I call this 'Leopard Bread', which is just my take on the Tiger Bread which you can find in bakeries and supermarkets. I never quite understand why it is called Tiger Bread as the pattern which appears on top of the bread as the paste cracks reminds me much more of the coat of a leopard than a tiger!

I suggest you watch the video for this lesson a few times before you make your first loaf. That way you will familiarise yourself with my techniques for dividing and shaping the dough before you start, so you can relax and feel in control. Remember, 'show the dough who's boss!'

INGREDIENTS

**Makes 4 loaves,
each approx. 450g**

1 x quantity of rested dough
(from Lesson 2)

For the Leopard Bread paste:

100g rice flour,
plus a little extra for dusting

5g fresh yeast

10g caster sugar

10g sesame oil

150g water

If you want to make Leopard Bread, mix the paste first, so that it will be ready by the time you come to rest your dough.

Have the flour in a bowl. Take the yeast, cover it in a little of the flour from your bowl and then rub it between the palms of your hands, so that you crumble it into the flour. Add the sugar, sesame oil and water, and whisk all together.

Leave at room temperature for around 20 minutes while you divide and shape your dough, by which time the paste will have thickened.

Very lightly flour your work surface.

Run your scraper around the edge of your mixing bowl to release the dough and then turn it out onto your work surface, so that the smooth 'top' is now underneath and the sticky 'bottom' is upwards.

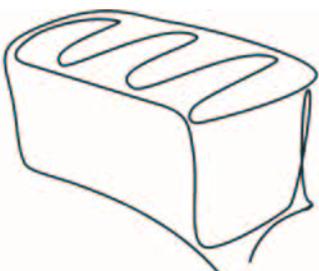
Dust your hands very lightly in flour and then gently tap the dough into a rough rectangle.

With the long side facing you, take the upper edge of the dough and fold into the centre, and press down gently. Next take the lower edge and fold it over the top.

Now turn the dough over so that the 'seam' is underneath, and your smooth 'top' is back facing upwards. By folding in this way you create a strong 'spine' along the length of the dough.

Now you are ready to divide the dough. Have your scales ready and use your scraper to cut and weigh it into four equal pieces of around 450g each – a few grams here and there won't make a difference, but try to get into the habit of being as accurate as possible, so that each piece of dough proves and bakes for the same length of time.

As you cut each piece, just tidy and tuck under the edges so that there is no stickiness.





Without adding any more flour to your work surface, take your first piece of dough and press it down gently. Then turn it over so that the sticky 'bottom' is upwards.

Move the dough around over your surface so that it picks up a very fine dusting of the flour, and then ease it into a diamond shape.

Fold the right hand point of the diamond into the centre and then repeat with the left hand point and press down. As before, you are now creating a 'spine' to give strength to the dough.

Now bring the upper edge of the dough, fold it into the centre and press down. 'Travel' the dough around through 180 degrees and again take the upper edge of the dough, fold into the centre and press down again.

Finally bring the upper edge of the dough all the way over to the lower edge and seal the 'seam' with your thumb. Turn the dough over, so that the seam is underneath and your smooth 'top' is facing upwards.

Take each piece of dough, roll lightly in a little flour and put into your tins, if using, with the smooth 'top' upwards. Place the tins on a baking tray and cover with a baking cloth.

If you want to bake your loaves loose, just lift each piece of shaped dough onto a baking tray lined with parchment paper, and again, cover with a baking cloth.

If you are making Leopard Bread, just before covering whisk the paste again briefly and then use a pastry brush to quickly dab and paint it quite thickly over the top and sides of the dough. Dust generously all over in a little more rice flour, using a fine sieve and then cover with your baking cloth.

Leave somewhere cosy to prove for around 1-1½ hours until just under double in volume. If you are using tins, the dough will have ballooned up above the rims, and if you are making Leopard Bread you will see that as the dough has expanded, the paste will have firmed up and cracked all over.

While the dough is proving, pre heat the oven to 230°C.

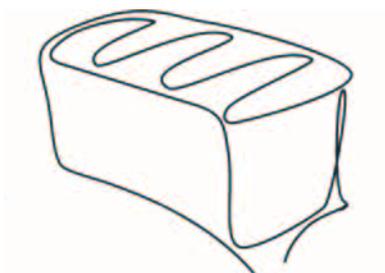
Fill a clean spray bottle with water.

Transfer the tins or trays to the preheated oven and, just before closing the door, quickly mist inside the oven, taking care not to spray directly onto the dough. The reason why you do this is to introduce steam which softens the top of the dough at the beginning of baking and stops the crust from forming too quickly. If this happens, as the gas inside expands it will find somewhere to 'burst' out, often at the sides, so your finished bread won't look as good as you would like.

After 10 minutes turn the temperature down to 210°C and bake for around 25 minutes until the tops of the loaves are golden. As always, treat the timing as a guide and keep an eye on the bread as it bakes.

If you are using tins, turn out the loaves, and if you want the bases of the loaves to take on a little more colour and firm up the crust, put back into the oven straight onto your baking stone or tray for a few more minutes.

Allow the loaves to cool on a rack.



4. Baguettes

Of course you can make the dough for baguettes by hand, in the same way as for the tin loaf, but once you are comfortable with the feel of the dough and the way it responds, I want to show you how to move on to using a mixer with a dough hook.

In this recipe, I am also introducing a very simple ferment known as a Polish, which will give a deeper, more acidic flavour and a more open texture to your bread. The exact origin of the word has been lost in the mists of time, though one story is that the technique was introduced by Polish bakers firstly to Vienna and then to France sometime in the mid nineteenth century.

When you make your dough in a mixer, you need to use cool water, as opposed to the 'neutral' water (i.e. neither warm, nor cold) which we used in Lesson 2, when making the dough by hand. This is to counteract the heat generated by the mechanical action of the mixer which might otherwise cause the dough to lose some of its texture and become over-sticky.

Also, when I make dough in a mixer I always put the water and any other liquid into the bowl first. I find that if the flour goes in first it takes longer for the ingredients to blend properly, and some of the flour tends to stick to the bottom of the bowl.

In this lesson I will also show you how to use a lame (handle and blade) to make the characteristic slashes in the top of the baguettes, and also how to use scissors to make *Pain d'Epis*, which you will see in bakeries all over France. *Epi* means 'ear of wheat' and that is what these beautiful spiky breads resemble.

Unless you are going to bake in batches, you will need to use both shelves of the oven and put in 2 baking stones or trays to get good and hot.

You will need enough peels to load all the loaves before putting them in the oven (again, unless baking in batches). In the video I use single baguette peels as of course we have stacks of these at the school, but if you have a couple of wide ones, you should be able to fit three or four baguettes on each. I also have an additional small peel for transferring the baguettes from their couche or baking cloth onto the loading peels.

INGREDIENTS

Makes 6 small baguettes

For the Polish ferment:

125g strong white bread flour

5g fresh yeast

125g warm water

For the dough:

500g cool water

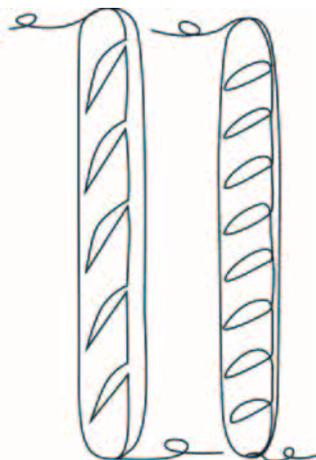
all of the Polish ferment

800g strong white bread flour,
plus a little extra for dusting

5g fresh yeast

15g fine sea salt

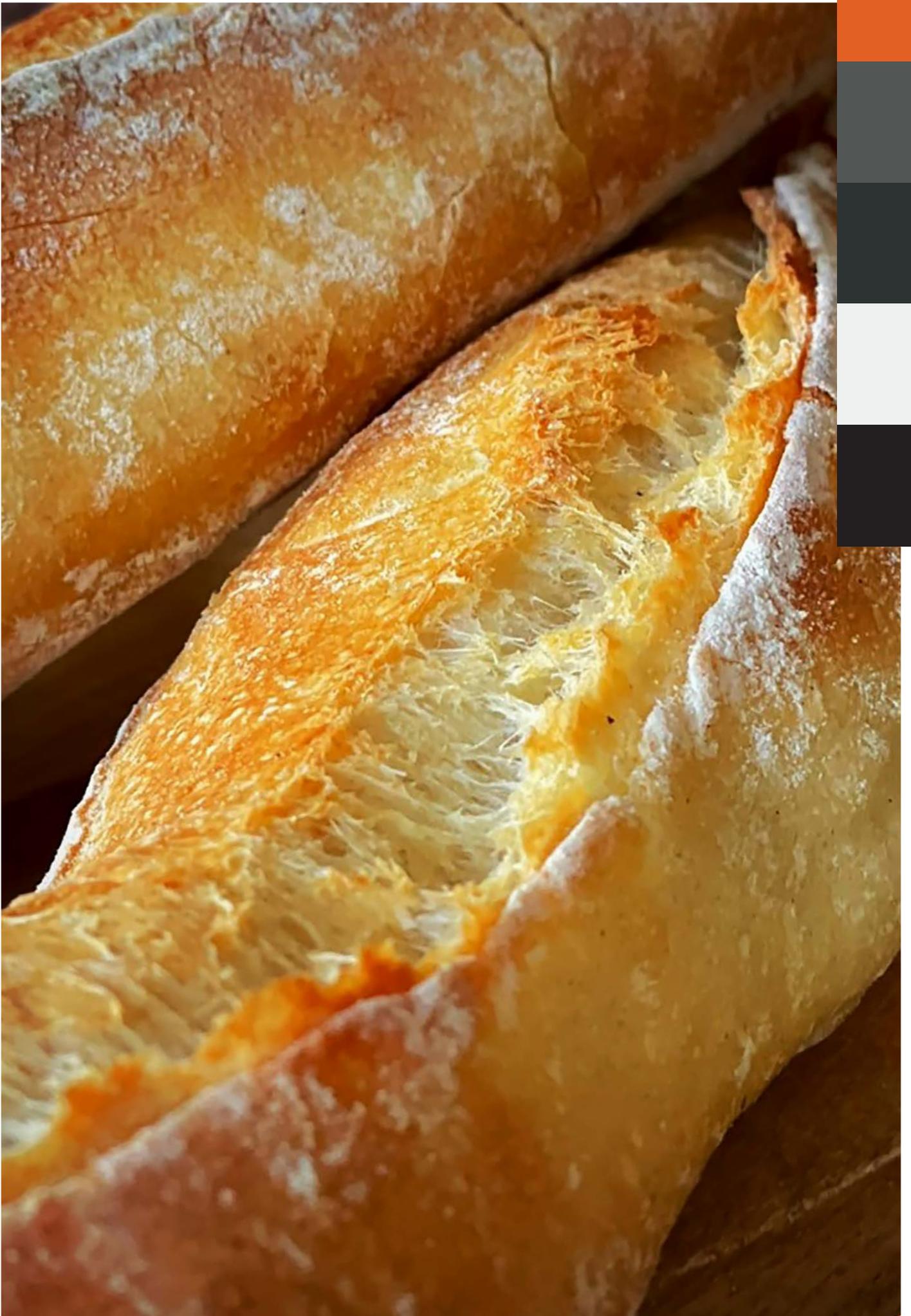
a little semolina flour,
for dusting the peels



TO MAKE THE FERMENT

Have the flour in your mixing bowl. Take the yeast, cover it in a little of the flour from your bowl and then rub it between the palms of your hands, so that you crumble it into the flour.

Add the warm water and whisk into a thick paste. Run your scraper around the side of the bowl to keep the ferment neat and tidy, then cover with a clean baking cloth and leave to rest at room temperature for 3-5 hours until the mixture is well risen and stretchy, bubbles have appeared and you smell the fermentation happening. If you prefer you can leave the ferment overnight, or up to 18 hours in the fridge, but if you do this, cover the bowl with an extra large freezer bag, which will prevent a crust from forming on top.



TO MAKE THE DOUGH

Pour the cool water into the bowl of your mixer and with the help of your scraper, add the ferment. Add the flour, then the yeast – as usual, just break it down a little with some flour between the palms of your hands. Don't add the salt just yet.

Now you are ready to begin mixing. The important thing when using a mixer is to be patient. Take it slowly and don't be tempted to turn the speed up to high straight away or you will heat up the dough too quickly. Remember that you are using the mixer to recreate the process of mixing by hand, so don't rush: let the dough come together in its own time.

Start off on slow speed (number 2 on most mixers) for 4 minutes, then turn up to medium (usually 3 or 4 on your mixer). After 5 minutes sprinkle the salt onto the dough and continue to mix. The reason for not doing this earlier is that it allows the ingredients to come together and develop a little first – as once you add the salt, it will bring the dough together quickly.

By now you will notice that the motor is having to work harder as the dough becomes stronger – if your mixer is close to the edge of your work surface, you might have to keep your hand on it to stop it jumping off (don't laugh, it has happened to me!). After another few minutes it will be looking bouncy and alive and will come cleanly and completely away from the sides of the bowl, making a flapping noise as it does so.

The dough is now ready, but what the mixer can't perform is the final step of bringing the quite sticky dough together into a smooth ball ready to rest. So you need to give it some shape and structure. This is where the technique you learned in Lesson 2 comes in.

Remember, don't be tempted to flour your surface.

Use your scraper to run around the edge of the bowl to release the dough and turn it out onto your work surface. As you will see it has no shape or structure yet: no 'top' and no 'bottom'.

So take your scraper and use it to 'walk the dough' as in Lesson 2: i.e. skim it over the work surface, and you will see it quickly forms a smooth 'top'. Now make a few quarter turns, i.e. stretch and arc your dough over itself, then turn it clockwise through 45 degrees and repeat the stretching and arcing. Try to do this in one continuous movement. Do this 4 or 5 times, then skim again with your scraper until the dough is neat and bouncy.

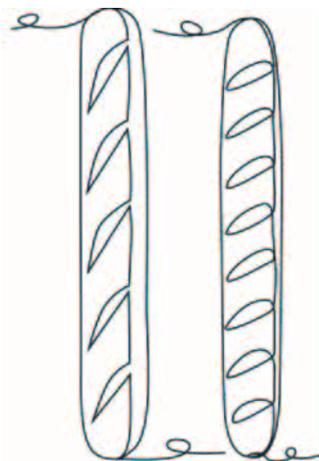
Now you can lightly dust your work surface with flour.

Turn the dough over so that the sticky 'bottom' is upwards and form into a ball by gathering in each 'corner' and pressing down with your thumb. Turn over again, so that the smooth 'top' is upwards and tuck in the dough all round so that you have a smooth, light, supple and elastic ball of dough.

Put 'top' side upwards into a clean bowl, cover with a baking cloth and leave to rest for 2 hours (or overnight in the fridge, covered with an extra large freezer bag) until just under double in volume and bouncy, bubbly and full of life.

Lightly flour your surface again.

Use your scraper to run around the edge of the bowl to release the dough and turn it out onto your work surface.



Pat the dough into a rough rectangle and dust with a little flour. Use your scraper to cut it lengthways into three strips and then into 6 x 260g pieces.

Line two large baking trays with couches or baking cloths and lightly dust with flour.

Lightly dust your work surface.

The shaping of the baguettes will become much more clear if you watch the video a few times, as the technique is much easier to demonstrate than describe! One thing to remember is not to make your baguettes too long to fit in your oven. You will be surprised how often people make this mistake!

You need to take the first piece of dough and turn it over so that the 'top' is underneath and, with the heel of your hand, flatten it into a rough rectangle. Now with your left hand (if you are right handed), start at the right-hand end and fold and twist the upper edge of the dough over your thumb into the centre, pressing down with the fingers of your other hand. What you are doing here is forming the 'spine' of the baguette, which is what gives it its strength.

Turn the dough through 180 degrees and repeat.

Finally bring the two edges together and fold over your thumb again, pressing down with the fingers of your other hand to seal. Turn over so that this 'seam' is underneath, and then gently roll each end to bring to a point.

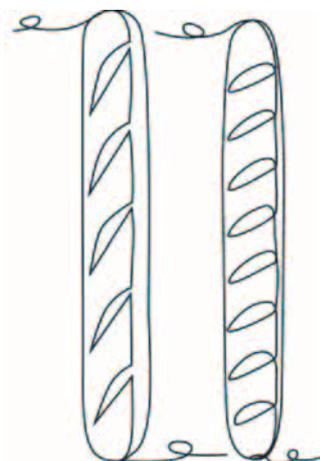
Shape the remaining pieces of dough in the same way.

A good hour or so before you are ready to bake, pre heat the oven to 230°C.

Lay four baguettes seam-side down on each lightly floured couche or cloth, making a pleat in between them, to keep them separate. Cover with another baking cloth and leave to prove for 35-40 minutes until just under double in volume. If you press the tops lightly they should just bounce back.

Sprinkle a little fine semolina onto your loading peels (the grains act like little rollers helping the bread to slide easily from the peels into the oven).

Lift the couche in order to slide each baguette onto your small peel and then use this to transfer the baguette to the loading peel. I like to dust the top of each bread with flour to give a nice finish.



Now you need to use your lame to slash the top of the baguettes. Hold it at a 45 degree angle and make one long central cut, or three shorter ones, as quickly and cleanly as you can, so that you don't drag the dough.

An alternative way to cut your dough is to use a pair of scissors, to make a pain d'epis. Begin at one end and, holding the scissors at a 45 degree angle to the dough, open them out to the width of the baguette, then snip three-quarters of the way through to create a 'V' shaped piece of dough. Push this to one side, then make a similar cut a little further along the length of the baguette, and push the pointed piece of dough to the opposite side. Continue doing this, so the effect is of an ear of wheat.

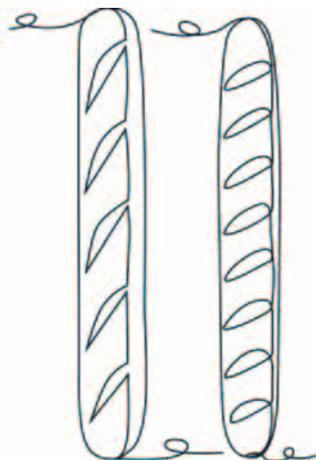
Slide the baguettes onto the hot stones or upturned baking trays in the oven, and with your water spray quickly mist inside, but avoid spraying water directly onto the dough.

Bake for around 20 minutes or until the baguettes are golden brown. Open the door slightly ajar for the last few minutes to allow some steam to escape so that you can finish off the bread in dry heat. This helps a good crunchy crust to form.

Take out and cool on a wire tray. As the cooler air hits the baguettes, if you are lucky you will hear the crusts crackle – that is the sound of your baguettes ‘singing’!

“

One thing to remember is not to make your baguettes too long to fit in your oven. You will be surprised how often people make this mistake!



5. Pizza

INGREDIENTS

Makes 6-7 pizzas

For the *biga* (ferment):

125g strong white bread flour

5g fresh yeast

125g warm water

For the dough:

1kg strong white bread flour,

plus a little extra for dusting

20g coarse semolina

25g fine sea salt

20g fresh yeast

650g water

30g extra virgin olive oil,

plus a little extra for coating

the dough & your work surface

all of the *biga*

a little fine semolina,

for dusting

For this recipe I use a liquid ferment – the Italian name for a ferment is *biga*. You could make your dough using only the *biga*, without adding any extra yeast, but it will take longer to develop. So if you want to have your dough ready quickly, then an additional 20g of fresh yeast, as in this recipe, will do the trick. I like to use a little coarse semolina in the dough, not so much for flavour, but to enhance the texture.

Once the dough has been made, formed into balls, and rested, you can put these into the fridge overnight to use the next day, or lay on a flat tray and put into the freezer. Then, when they are solid, transfer them to a freezer bag. Before you want to make your pizzas, defrost the balls of dough and then shape into your bases (if you shape them before freezing, they can become quite fragile, and might break).

The topping here is for a classic Margherita, but of course you can add whatever you like. At home I will make the pizza bases and then put out plates of different ingredients, so everyone can assemble their own. And if you want to keep back some of the dough, in the next lesson I will show you how to make a hearty Tartiflette Pizza, with crème fraiche, Reblochon cheese, leeks and smoked bacon.

For a Margherita you don't actually want the kind of beautiful soft creamy buffalo mozzarella that you would serve in a salad with tomatoes and basil, as it is too moist and will make your dough too wet. Instead choose a firmer mozzarella that you can slice and will melt nicely and give that classic stringy effect.

You can use bottled tomato passata, but I make my own version simply by taking a tin of good Italian whole or chopped tomatoes and pushing the contents through a fine sieve. As any Italian will tell you, good quality tinned tomatoes, grown in sunshine and harvested and canned at just the right time, are essential for the store cupboard, as the tomatoes will always be reliably full of flavour.

Remember that while you need warm water for your ferment, when it comes to mixing the dough, if you are doing this in a mixer, use cool water.

Topping for each pizza:

1 x 400g tin whole or chopped

Italian plum tomatoes

or tomato passata

100g good firm mozzarella,

thinly sliced

fresh basil leaves, torn

dried oregano

sea salt and freshly

ground black pepper

a little extra virgin olive oil

TO MAKE THE FERMENT

Have the flour in your mixing bowl, then add the yeast and rub it into a little of the flour between the palms of your hands. Add the water and whisk into a rough dough.

Tidy up the mixture around the side of your bowl with your scraper, then cover with a baking cloth and leave at room temperature for a minimum of 3-4 hours to mature, after which it will be bubbling and will have a creamy colour and a stretchy structure. Alternatively you can cover it with an extra large freezer bag to prevent the surface from drying out and keep it in the fridge overnight.



TO MAKE THE DOUGH

Of course you can mix the dough by hand (see Lesson 2) but it is quick and easy to do in a mixer with a dough hook. In a bowl combine the flour and semolina and add your salt on one side of the bowl and your yeast on the other. Rub the yeast with a little of the flour between your fingertips to break it down.

Pour the water into the bowl of your mixer, then the olive oil, and with the help of your scraper, add in all of the biga, followed by the flour, semolina and salt.

Start on slow speed for 4 minutes, then turn up to medium speed until the dough comes away cleanly from the sides of the bowl.

Turn it out onto your work surface (don't flour it first) with the help of your scraper.

Now you need to shape the dough and give it a 'top' and 'bottom'. Use your scraper to quickly gather the dough together and then arc it over itself a few times (see Lesson 2) and it will quickly transform into a neat bouncy 'pillow' of dough. Drizzle with a little extra virgin olive oil and gently rub it all over the surface of the dough. The dough will look and feel silky, but no longer sticky.

Put into a clean mixing bowl, cover with a baking cloth and leave for 3 hours minimum, but up to 6 hours at room temperature, until bubbly and risen to just under double in volume. Or, for an even better crust and flavour, leave it overnight, or up to 48 hours, in the fridge (covered with an extra large freezer bag). This longer maturing time helps the dough to rise very slowly and it will develop a little acidity and give a texture to your baked pizza that is crispy on the outside and slightly chewy inside.

After the dough has rested, rub the surface with a little more olive oil. Now lightly oil your work surface too. With the help of the rounded end of your scraper, turn out the dough.

Prod into a rough rectangle and using your scraper and scales, divide into six or seven 200g pieces.

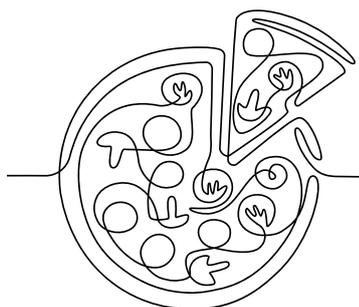
Lightly oil a baking tray and dust with fine semolina.

Take each piece of dough and turn it over, so that the smooth 'top' is now underneath. Shape into a ball by folding in each 'corner' to the centre and pressing it down lightly with your thumb, then turn it over so that the 'top' is back facing upwards again. Shape into a ball by cupping your hand over the dough and smoothing it into shape.

Dust in a mixture of flour and semolina (roughly half and half) and lay the balls of dough on your baking tray.

Cover with a baking cloth and leave to rest for up to 1 hour at room temperature (or overnight in the fridge, covered with an extra large freezer bag).

Pre heat your oven to 230°C or as high as it will go and put in your baking stones or upturned heavy baking trays to heat up.



When you are ready to make your pizzas, if using tinned tomatoes, either push them through a fine sieve, or if you prefer you can blitz them in a blender.

Lightly dust your work surface with a mixture of flour and semolina (again, roughly half and half), making sure that the flour is evenly distributed so that the dough won't stick.

Take the first ball and place the heel of your hand gently in the centre, then push it away from you so that it stretches the dough out. Keep prodding and pushing the dough outwards until you have a rough circle of about 20-22cm in diameter. The dough around the edges should be slightly thicker than the centre to form a slight rim.

Repeat with the other six balls.

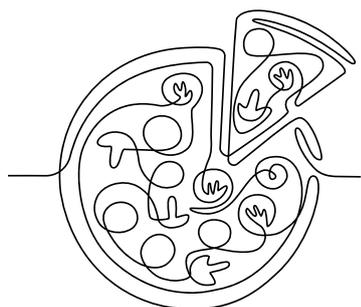
Lift the first pizza base onto a peel, dusted with semolina. Spread the tomato passata evenly over the top, but within the rim. Scatter with the slices of mozzarella, tear some basil leaves on top and scatter with a little dried oregano. Add a twist of black pepper, and a little sea salt and drizzle with a little more extra virgin olive oil.

Slide the first pizza onto the preheated stone or tray in the oven. If you have pre heated the oven at 240°C or 250°C turn the heat down to 230°C and bake for 6-8 minutes (but keep checking, depending on the temperature) at the top of the oven, until the edges become golden brown and crispy – you may need to turn the pizza around half way through so that it bakes evenly.

Bake the next pizzas in the same way.

“

**Learning to trust your senses
and your judgement – these things
come with experience, and experience
comes with repetition.**



6. Tartiflette Pizza

One of my favourite things to eat is Tartiflette, which is a hearty, warming dish from the mountains, most famous in the Haute-Savoie region of the French Alps. It is made with a mixture of potatoes, cream or crème fraîche, bacon and the famous local Reblochon cheese, baked in the oven – but these ingredients are also fantastic as a topping for pizza dough.

Tartiflette is a very rustic idea, so I leave the potatoes with their skin on. I like the tanginess of crème fraîche, but if you don't have any, you can use sour cream or double cream. Nutmeg is also a key ingredient for me – I love it anyway, but here it really brings all the flavours together.

INGREDIENTS

**Makes 2-3,
depending on the size**

half quantity of pizza dough,
shaped into 2 or 3 balls
and rested (as in Lesson 5)

2 eggs

250g crème fraîche

sea salt and freshly
ground black pepper

nutmeg, to taste

1 small leek, finely sliced

2 medium potatoes,
boiled (skin on), and sliced

approx. 200g thinly sliced
smoked streaky bacon
or pancetta (if the slices
are thicker, or you are using
lardons, pan-fry these
first, quickly, just enough
to colour them)

1 whole small Reblochon
cheese (approx. 240g)

a little flour and semolina,
for dusting

Pre heat the oven to 230°C and put in a baking stone(s) or upturned heavy baking tray(s) to heat up.

Crack the eggs into a bowl and add the crème fraîche. Beat together with a wooden spoon (I prefer a spoon to a whisk, as I like the mixture to be quite uneven).

Season with pepper, salt and a good grating of nutmeg.

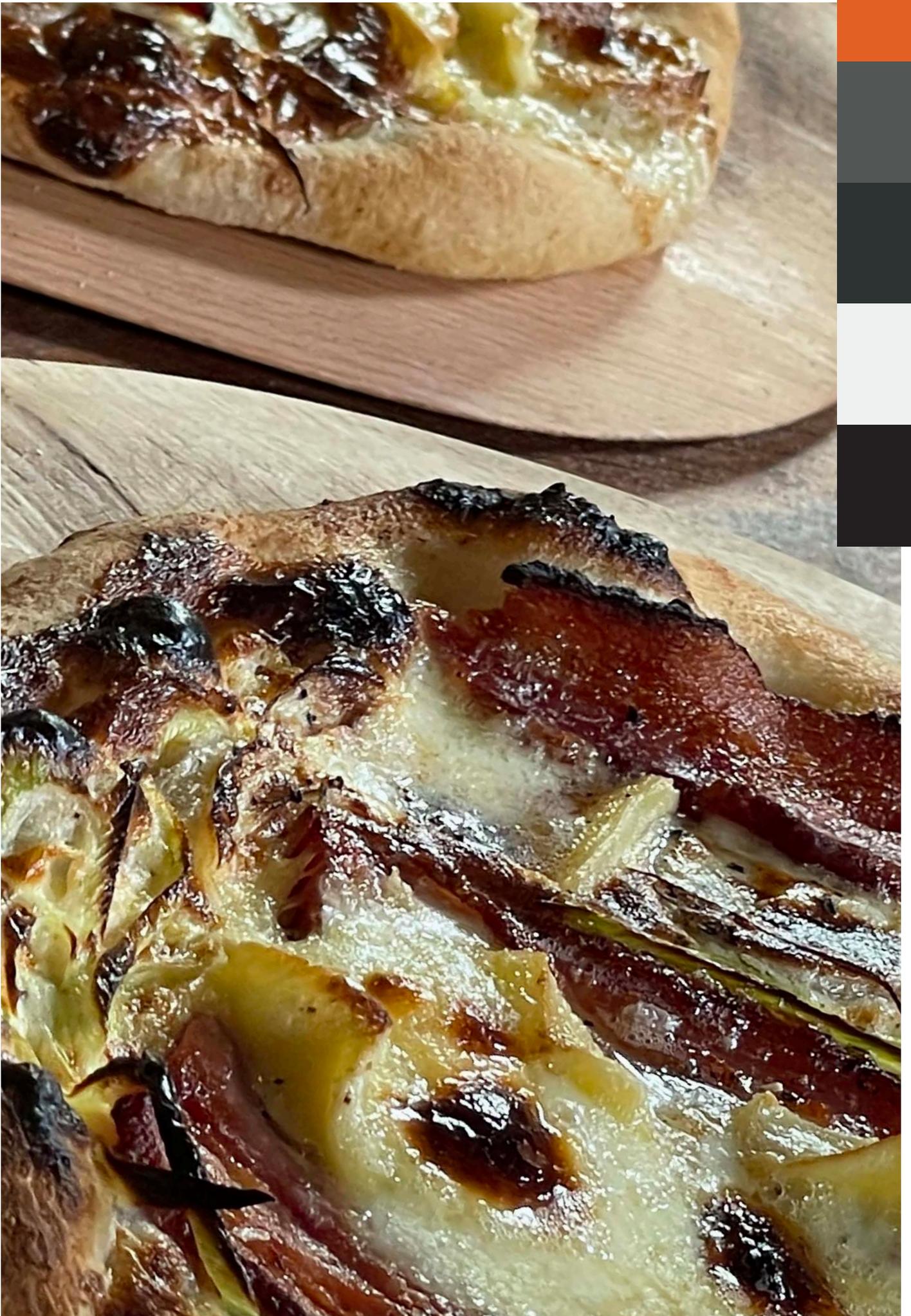
Lightly flour your work surface with plain flour and a wooden peel with semolina.

Roll out your first piece of dough quite thinly and transfer to the peel.

Add the finely sliced leeks to the crème fraîche mixture in your bowl, then sliced potatoes, and spread some of this over the top of the dough. Arrange four or five slices of smoked bacon on top, finish with a generous amount of thickly sliced Reblochon, and a last twist of salt and pepper.

Repeat with the rest of the dough balls and topping.

Slide onto your hot baking stone(s) or upturned baking tray(s) and bake for 8-10 minutes until the cheese has melted and the bacon is crisp.



7. Ciabatta & Fougasse

INGREDIENTS

Makes 4 ciabatta and 4 fougasse

For the ferment:

350g strong white bread flour,
plus a little extra for dusting

2g (approx. ¼ teaspoon)
fresh yeast

180g warm water

For the dough:

380g cool water

all of the ferment

450g ciabatta flour
(or half italian 00
and half strong white flour)

10g fresh yeast

50g olive oil

15g fine sea salt

a little olive oil, for greasing

The famous 'slipper' bread – its name comes from the shape – is built on a very simple ferment, or *biga*, to give it its Italian name. Ciabatta is a very light bread full of air pockets which create the characteristic holes. The breads freeze very well if you part bake (or three-quarter bake) them. If you want to do this, take them out of the oven after about 7 minutes, at which point the crust is forming but the bread will still be light coloured and quite soft. Let them cool completely, wrap in greaseproof paper and then put them into a freezer bag and into the freezer. When you want to use them, defrost them and then bake in a preheated oven at around 200/210°C for around 10-12 minutes until the crust is light golden.

Unusually for me, you will see I dust the dough for the ciabatta in plenty of flour when I shape it and rest it. The flour doesn't go into the dough, but just sits on the surface and gives the baked ciabatta its classic look.

With the same dough you can also make a fun French style of bread – fougasse – I shape mine to look like a big leaf from a cheese plant, and it is one of those breads that always makes people smile when they make it for the first time. Fougasse has its roots in the latin word for hearth (*focus*) and this was usually just a piece of dough that would be cut and put into a wood fired oven to see how long it took to bake. That way the baker could judge the temperature before putting in the bread. It is funny to think that from such humble beginnings fougasse have become very fashionable!

You can make the fougasse with plain dough, but I like to add some green olives and fennel seeds, which really bring out the flavour of the olives. For dusting the fougasse, I use a fine cornmeal or polenta flour, which gives the finished bread a rich golden colour.

For the fougasse (optional) – enough for half the dough:

230g green olives, pitted

1 teaspoon fennel seeds
(more, if you prefer)

cornmeal flour, for dusting

a little fine semolina,
for dusting the peels

TO MAKE THE FERMENT

Have the flour in a bowl, add your yeast, cover with a little flour and then rub gently between the palms of your hands, to crumble. You can add the water and mix by hand using your scraper, but if you want to use a mixer with a dough hook, put the water into the bowl first, then add the flour and yeast. Mix on slow speed for a few minutes, just until all the ingredients come together in a thick, rough mass.

Turn out of the bowl and very quickly and lightly neaten it into a ball. Put into a clean bowl, cover with a baking cloth and leave at room temperature. If you have any draughts coming through, put an extra large freezer bag loosely over the top for added protection.

Leave to rest for around 18 hours by which time the ferment will be spongy and stretchy, perfect scaffolding for your dough.



TO MAKE THE DOUGH

Pour the cool water into the bowl of your mixer and add the ferment.

Have your flour in a bowl, add the yeast, cover it with a little flour and then rub gently between the palms of your hands, to crumble it into the flour. Add to the bowl of the mixer. Keep back the olive oil and salt for now.

Start off on slow speed until the flour and water are all incorporated. Now pour in your olive oil in a steady stream. If you add it at the beginning it will act like a waterproof coating for the flour, making it harder for the water to be absorbed.

Once you have added the oil you will see the dough will slide around at first, but gradually the oil will be absorbed into the dough. Now you can add your salt, let it mix in and then turn up the speed to medium. I hold back the salt, to allow the ingredients to mix and develop a little first as once it is added it has the effect of bringing the dough together quickly.

When the dough starts to make a flapping sound and comes away cleanly from the sides of the bowl, it is ready.

The dough will be strong, but quite sticky, so now, as always, you now need to give some shape to the dough, creating a 'top' and a 'bottom' before you can leave it to rest.

Use your scraper to release the dough and help you turn it out onto the table (don't flour or oil it first).

With your scraper, skim it, then alternately stretch and arc it over itself a few times (as in Lesson 2) and skim again. Quickly you will see the smooth 'top' forming.

At this point, if you want to make some olive and fennel fougasse as well as ciabatta, divide the dough in two, using your scraper. Put half back into the bowl of your mixer with the olives and fennel seeds, and mix on slow speed very briefly, just until the additional ingredients are incorporated but not crushed.

Turn the dough out onto your work surface with the help of your scraper, and as before skim it with your scraper, then stretch and arc it over itself a few times, and skim again, so that you create the smooth 'top' again.

Drizzle a little olive oil over each piece of dough and rub it over the surface with your hand. Put into separate bowls, cover each with a baking cloth and leave at room temperature for around 2 hours, by which time it will have risen really well and be full of big bubbles.

FOR THE CIABATTA

While the ciabatta are proving, preheat your oven to 230°C and put in your baking stones or upturned heavy baking trays to heat up.

Have ready a large wooden board, or a big tray lined with a baking cloth, and dust very well with flour. Dust your work surface really well with flour, too.

Lightly flour the top of the ciabatta dough and use your scraper to release it from the sides and help you to turn it out onto your floured work surface.



Sprinkle some more flour over the top and ease the dough out into a rough rectangle.

Use your scraper to cut in half lengthways, then cut each half in half again widthways so that you have four pieces.

Gently stretch each piece – this is what gives the bread its characteristic ‘slipper’ shape – and lay on your floured board, sticky ‘bottom’ facing upwards. Cover with a baking cloth and leave at room temperature for around 30 minutes.

FOR THE FOUGASSE

While the ciabatta are proving, you can make your fougasse. Brush the white bread flour from your work surface – if you do this with your little dedicated dusting brush, you can use it again. Now generously dust the surface with the cornmeal flour, and also dust the top of the dough.

As before, ease the dough out into a rough rectangle and with your scraper cut in half lengthways. Slightly stretch each end of the first strip into a point, then cut in half widthways. This will give you two triangular shapes.

Take the first triangle and turn so that the short side is facing you.

With your scraper, make a cut down the centre of the dough. Make sure you stop short of the edges, but cut right through to your work surface. Next, on either side of this central cut make three diagonal cuts fanning outwards. Again don’t go right to the edges. With your fingers just open out the slits you have made. If you like, you can also use your scraper to make some little decorative nicks around the outer edges of the dough.

TO BAKE THE FOUGASSE

There is no proving required for this bread, so just lift it onto your wooden peel and from there slide straight into the oven. Keep an eye on the fougasse as they bake. They will take 10-12 minutes maximum to become golden.

Remove with the help of your peel, and cool on a wire rack.

TO BAKE THE CIABATTA

Leave the oven at 230°C. This time you are going to add steam to your oven when you put in the bread, so have ready a clean spray filled with water.

Once the ciabatta have proved, turn them over so that the ‘top’ is facing upwards. Lift the first one – with your hands underneath, and without putting your thumb on top, so as not to indent the dough – then shake off the excess flour and gently stretch the dough again as you place it on your peel. Repeat with the three remaining ciabatta – if you have a wide peel you will be able to put two ciabatta on each.

Slide straight into the oven onto your hot stones or upturned baking trays, and with your water spray quickly mist inside the oven, avoiding spraying water directly on the bread before closing the door.

Bake for around 12 minutes, checking regularly, until golden brown.



8. Focaccia

Everybody loves focaccia. It is one of those wonderful Italian breads that have just become absorbed into our culture.

For this very oily dough I mix the water into the flour first before adding the olive oil, otherwise this will stop the flour from absorbing the water. Then when you incorporate the oil it brings a beautiful softness to the dough.

You can add very fine slices or shavings of garlic, onions, peppers or courgettes, or even a sprinkling of grated cheese (at the point in the method where I add the herbs) but I prefer the simplicity of rosemary and rock salt.

INGREDIENTS

Makes 2 large focaccia

320g cool water

500g strong white bread flour

15g fresh yeast

10g fine sea salt

50g extra virgin olive oil,
plus extra for oiling your
work surface

For the topping:

a few sprigs of fresh rosemary
(and thyme if you like)

a generous handful of olives,
pitted

extra virgin olive oil,
for drizzling

good quality rock salt

Pour the water into the bowl of your mixer.

Have the flour in a separate bowl. Take the yeast, cover it in a little of the flour from your bowl and then rub it between the palms of your hands, as if you were washing them, so that the yeast crumbles into the flour. Add to the bowl of the mixer.

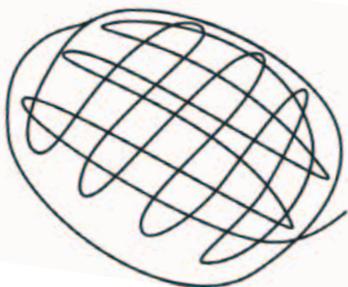
Start the mixer on slow speed and after 4 minutes begin to add the oil in a slow, steady stream. The dough will slide around a bit, but that is normal, as it will take a bit of time to absorb all of the oil. After about 7 minutes, increase the speed to medium, to get a bit more energy into the dough. After another 3 minutes or so add the salt (it can help the ingredients to mix better if you delay the salt). The whole process will take around 18-22 minutes altogether – don't be impatient, just take your time and wait until it comes away from the edges of the bowl.

Run around the edges of the bowl with your scraper and then use it to turn the dough out onto your work surface (don't flour it first).

It will be a sticky mass, so you need to get some shape into it. With your scraper skim it a few times (see Lesson 2) and quickly you will see it start to form into a ball with a shiny top. Then work it by slapping it down, stretching and arcing it over itself a few times (see Lesson 2) to introduce some more air into it. You will see the air pockets form and the dough will become bouncy and responsive.

Rub a little olive oil over the surface of the dough.

Lightly oil a clean bowl and put in the dough. Cover with a baking cloth and leave to rest for 1½- 2 hours until just under double in volume and full of big bubbles.





Lightly oil two baking trays and pre heat your oven to 230°C.

While the dough is still in the bowl, drizzle the surface with a little more olive oil and also rub some oil over your work surface.

With the rounded end of your scraper go around the bowl to release the dough and turn it out onto your work surface.

Use your scraper to cut the dough in half, then take the first piece and flip it over onto your first baking tray (so the smooth 'top' of the dough is back facing upwards). Repeat with the second piece.

Strip the leaves off the sprigs of rosemary (and thyme if you like) and scatter over the surface of the dough. It might seem like a lot of herbs, but as the dough rises around it, you will need plenty to infuse it with flavour.

Gently prod the leaves into the dough, adding some olives and a little more olive oil if you like, and just dimple the dough – use your hands like claws, so that you push down with the tips of your fingers, without pulling or stretching the dough.

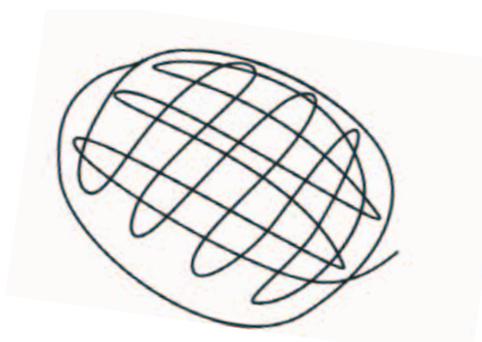
Leave to prove for 20-30 minutes (you may notice I did this for slightly less time in the video, because my kitchen was very warm that day and the dough was racing – these are the small adjustments that with experience you will learn to make). Sprinkle the surface of the dough with a little more oil and again dimple the dough with your fingertips, pushing down to the bottom of the tray – by doing this you create little air pockets inside.

Sprinkle on the rock salt and immediately put into the preheated oven. Bake for 25-30 minutes until the focaccia is a light golden brown.

Remove from the oven and slide onto a wire rack to cool. Drizzle with a little more olive oil while still warm.

“

Relax and trust my technique.



9. Rye Bread with Sultanas

The dough for this is really sticky, more like a thick batter.

I love the richness of rye flour, however it contains very little gluten compared to flour milled from wheat, which means that if you make a loaf with 100 per cent rye it can be very dense, so I use a mixture of the two flours in order to lighten the finished bread.

My secret ingredient is coffee, which works almost like a spice, infusing the bread, but without giving it a recognisable coffee flavour. The fruit is optional, but I love the sweetness that the sultanas bring. You could use raisins if you prefer, or even some chopped dried apricots or prunes. And the caraway brings out the flavour of the rye. A slice of this is great with cheese or smoked salmon, pâtés and terrines.

I usually make this dough by hand as it is a very simple one, which you can mix with a wooden spoon, but it is quite stiff to work, so if you prefer to use a mixer, use a paddle rather than a dough hook.

I like to make lots of small loaves in little tins, which means they bake really quickly, though of course you could make one big loaf if you prefer – just extend the baking time.

INGREDIENTS

**Makes 10 small loaves
(approx. 140g each)**

You need 10 mini loaf tins,
approx. 9cm x 6cm x 4cm

For the Poolish ferment:

250g dark rye flour

6g fresh yeast

275g warm water

For the dough:

250g water

all of the Poolish ferment

200g dark rye flour

210g strong white bread flour

20g fresh yeast

15g salt

1 tablespoon good ground coffee

250g sultanas (optional)

1 teaspoon caraway seeds

TO MAKE THE FERMENT

Have the flour in a mixing bowl. Take the yeast, cover it in a little of the flour from your bowl and then rub it between the palms of your hands, as if you were washing them, so that the yeast crumbles into the flour. Pour in all the water and mix with a wooden spoon to a thick, greyish brown paste.

With your scraper tidy around the bowl to bring the ferment neatly together then cover with a baking cloth and leave to rest at room temperature for at least 3 hours, but preferably 12 hours or overnight until it is quite spongy and you can see air pockets forming. Due to the low gluten in the rye it won't have the stretchiness of a Poolish made with strong white bread flour.

TO MAKE THE DOUGH

First add the water to the ferment and stir with a wooden spoon to loosen it until it becomes like a thick porridge. This will make it easier to work in the flour.

Combine the rye and white flours in a separate bowl, add the yeast, and rub it into a little of the flour as above, then add to your ferment, add the salt and mix all together with your wooden spoon. Beat the mixture until it is well blended and comes together into a thick dough.

Add the coffee, fruit and seeds and again mix well with your wooden spoon so that all the ingredients are incorporated.



As this is a batter, the dough doesn't need to rest before dividing, so just lightly flour your work surface with rye flour. Place your tins on two baking trays and lightly flour them inside.

With your scraper loosen the dough around the edges of the bowl and then turn out onto your work surface. It will be very sticky, so dust the top with a little more flour.

Flour your scales too, so that the dough doesn't cling to them.

Use your scraper to cut off pieces of dough, and weigh them – each piece should be 140-150g. Roll each one lightly and quickly with the palms of your hand, dust in a little flour and put into the tins.

Cover with a baking cloth and leave to prove for 1-1½ hours until the dough is well risen above the tins.

“

My secret ingredient is coffee, which works almost like a spice, infusing the bread, but without giving it a recognisable flavour.

While the dough is proving, pre heat the oven to 230°C.

Place the trays of tins in the oven and quickly mist inside with water, taking care not to spray directly onto the dough.

Bake for 5-10 minutes then turn down the heat to 210°C for around 30 minutes – but check after 20 minutes. Remember every oven is different.

When the loaves are done, they will look quite dark and sound hollow if tapped on the base with your finger.

After they have been out of the oven for a minute or so, just lift the loaves out and prop them up on their tins so that the bases can dry out, as a little condensation can form in the bottom of the tins.

Cool completely on a wire rack.



10. Bagels

These are a Bertinet family favourite, especially filled with smoked salmon or avocado and cream cheese, or pastrami, cornichons and mustard.

For this dough I use a slightly different ferment – still made with just flour, water and yeast but, instead of being liquid, this one starts off quite stiff and tight, then overnight it will become more like a sponge, and will really help the flavour, colour and structure of the bagels. I also like to use honey in the bagel dough, rather than sugar as it adds a little softness and colour.

The characteristic chewy bite comes from plunging the bagels into simmering water before baking – this softens the surface of the dough and stops it from forming a crust in the oven. I find a little bicarbonate of soda added to the water also helps the texture, colour and sheen.

The bagels freeze really well once they are baked. Just cool them right down and put them into a freezer bag to pull out whenever you want them.

You will need a rolling pin for this.

INGREDIENTS

Makes 10

For the ferment:

200g strong white bread flour

5g fresh yeast

110g warm water

For the dough:

all of the ferment

300g warm water

20g honey

550g strong white bread flour

20g fresh yeast

10g fine sea salt

1 teaspoon of bicarbonate
of soda per litre of water
(optional)

poppy seeds and/or sesame
seeds for the topping (optional)

TO MAKE THE FERMENT

Have the flour in a bowl, then take the yeast, cover it in a little of the flour from your bowl and then rub it between the palms of your hands, as if you were washing them, so that the yeast crumbles into the flour.

Add the water and use your scraper to gather the ingredients together until you have a quite stiff, rough dough – don't be tempted to add more water.

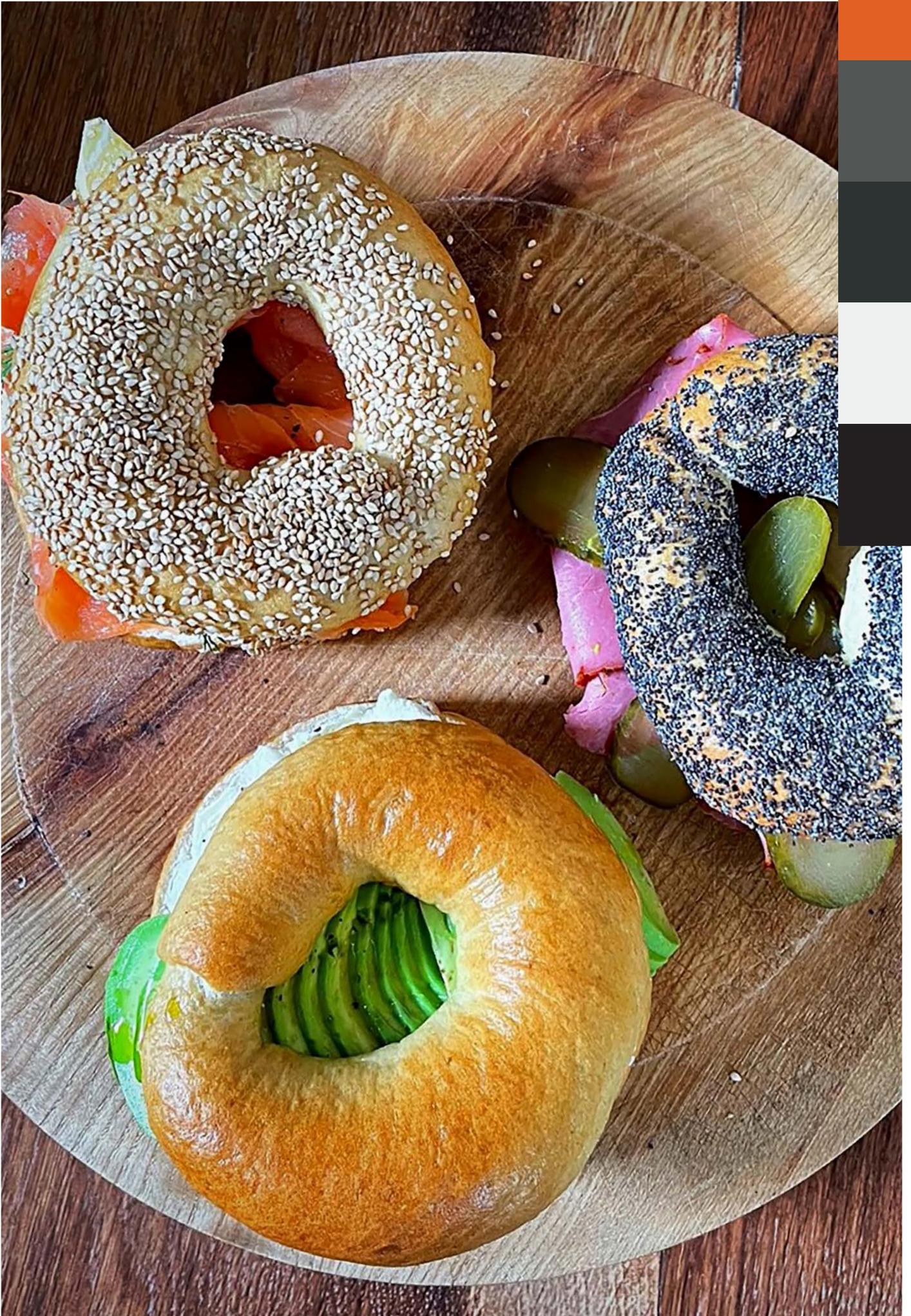
Turn it out onto your work surface and just fold it over itself a few times to neaten it into a ball. Put back into your bowl and cover with a baking cloth and leave at room temperature, out of the way of draughts, for 12-18 hours. By this time the ferment will have formed a crust on top and be spongy underneath.

TO MAKE THE DOUGH

Transfer the ferment to the bowl of your mixer (with a dough hook), and add the warm water, honey and flour. Usually I use cool water when I make dough in a mixer but this dough takes only a short time to come together so it shouldn't overheat. Next add the yeast. As before, dust it in a little of the flour and rub between the palms of your hands to crumble it in. Finally add the salt.

Mix on slow for about 4 minutes, then turn up to medium just for another few minutes, as this dough will form and come away from the sides of the bowl quite quickly. It will be very stiff, and not sticky – this is a very easy dough to work with!

Use your scraper to help you turn it out onto your work surface (don't flour it first).



To form into a ball, take each 'corner' and fold it into the centre, then press down with your thumb. Then turn over so that your smooth 'top' is upwards, and cupping your hands around it, just smooth and tuck in the dough all around.

Put into a clean bowl, cover with a baking cloth and leave to rest for 1-1½ hours, until just under double in volume. By now the dough should be quite spongy.

Have ready two trays lined with baking cloths.

Without flouring your work surface, turn out the dough onto it with the help of your scraper and press gently into a rough rectangle.

With the long side facing you, fold the upper edge into the centre and press down, then bring the upper edge all the way over the top and tuck in, so that the seam is underneath.

Use your scraper to divide the dough into around 10 x 120g pieces.

To shape the bagels, flatten each piece of dough, as before, then roll the upper edge into the centre, press down, roll the upper edge over again, press down as before, and then with your fingers seal the two edges together. Turn over so that the 'seam' is underneath.

Now roll each piece with your fingers until it is around 30cm long, then join the ends together to make a circle (the 'seam' should be inside). Press the ends together (overlapping them slightly), then, to seal properly, put your hand through the circle and roll gently against the work surface.

Lay the bagels, smooth 'top' uppermost, on the cloth-lined trays. Cover with another baking cloth or cloths, and leave to prove for 30-40 minutes.

While the bagels are proving, pre heat the oven to 230°C.

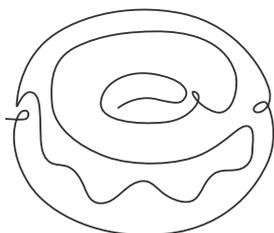
Tip the poppy seeds and/or sesame seeds (if using) into separate bowls, wide enough for you to press the tops of the bagels into them (cereal bowls or deep saucers work well).

Have ready two baking trays lined with baking parchment.

Bring a large pan of water to a simmer. Add the bicarbonate of soda if using.

Slide the bagels, three or four at a time and smooth sides downwards, into the water for about 10 seconds, then turn over using a slotted spoon or long handled sieve and leave for another 30 seconds on the other side (about a minute in all). You will see the bagels puff up.

Lift out, drain off the excess water then, if you are coating them in seeds, dip the smooth side only into the sesame and/or poppy seeds and lay them, seed-side upwards, on the baking trays (lined with parchment paper).



Put the trays into the preheated oven and bake for about 8-10 minutes, keeping an eye on them until light golden on top and underneath. They will feel firm when they first come out of the oven but after a minute or so will soften. You may need to turn the trays around in the oven halfway through the baking time so the bagels brown evenly all over.

Cool completely on a wire rack.

11. Burger Buns

INGREDIENTS

Makes 20

For the roux:

200g crème fraiche
50g strong white bread flour

For the dough:

125g butter
all of the roux
380g full fat cold milk
4 eggs
950g strong white bread flour
20g fine sea salt
80g caster sugar
30g fresh yeast

For the glaze:

2 eggs
a pinch fine sea salt

If you have gone to the trouble of making a great burger with the best quality beef, it seems a shame to put it inside a flavourless, flabby bun – whereas a really good, rich and robust bun makes the whole burger experience so much more exciting.

This recipe and those in the lessons that follow (for brioche, challah and babka) all belong to the family of enriched doughs in which the likes of milk, eggs, butter, sugar or honey are added to the basic ingredients to give a softer, richer dough, which might have just a touch of sweetness, or be really sweet – it all depends on the quantity of the enriching ingredients to be added.

Enriched doughs can of course be made by hand following the method in Lesson 2, however I find they are best made in a mixer which brings the ingredients together more easily and keeps the dough nice and light.

The method for making enriched doughs in your mixer is always the same: add the liquids, such as milk and eggs, to the bowl first, and then the flour, salt and sugar. Keep these on the opposite side of the bowl to the yeast. As mentioned before, if you introduce the salt directly to the yeast it will suck the moisture from it, but the sugar can also work on the yeast, caramelising it, so that it burns itself out.

For this dough I also add a simple roux, made with flour and crème fraiche, which helps to enhance the softness even more and create fantastic bouncy buns which will stay fresh for longer. They also freeze brilliantly.

You could also use this dough to make fruit buns – just add some dried fruit and/or chopped nuts, or even chocolate chips, to your dough at the end of the mixing time on slow speed for one minute, no more.

TO MAKE THE ROUX

In a pan bring the crème fraiche just up to the boil, then take off the heat and whisk in the flour a little at a time until you have a thick paste. Leave to cool down completely.

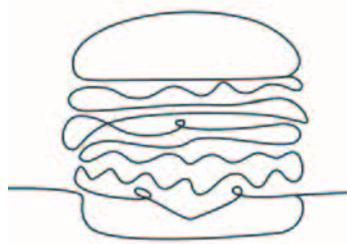
TO MAKE THE DOUGH

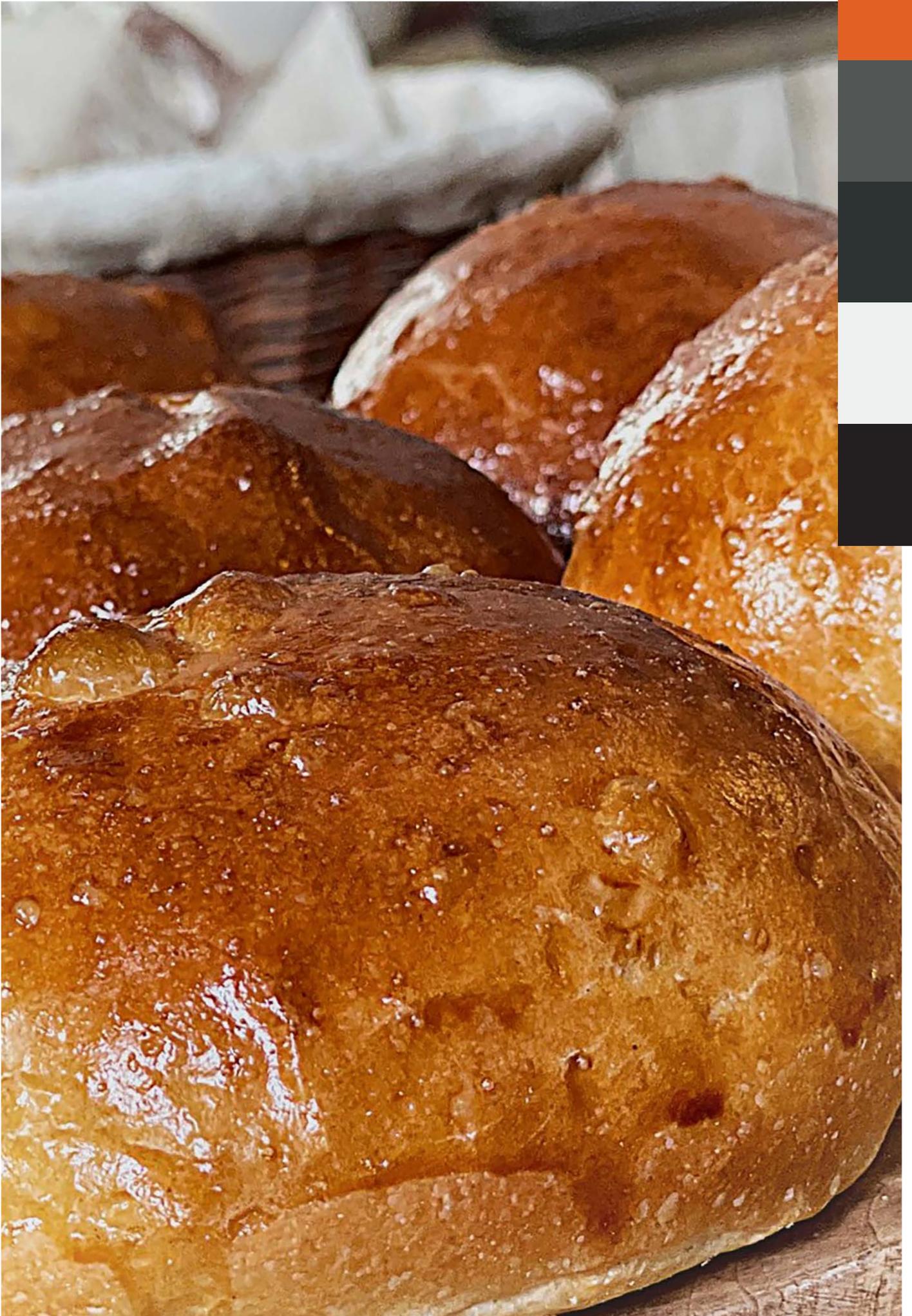
Take the butter from the fridge, put it between two sheets of greaseproof paper and bash it with a rolling pin so that it is softened, but still cold.

Transfer the roux to the bowl of a mixer (with a dough hook), then pour in the cold milk and add the eggs.

Have the flour in a separate bowl. Put in the butter and add the salt, along with the sugar on one side and the yeast on the other (always keep the salt and sugar separate from the yeast until you have rubbed it in, so that these powerful ingredients don't destroy each other!).

Rub the yeast into a little of the flour between the palms of your hands then add the contents to the cooled roux in the bowl of your mixer.





Mix on slow speed for 4 minutes, then turn the speed up to medium and continue to mix until the dough comes cleanly away from the sides of the bowl.

The dough should be soft and stretchy, but it will also be quite sticky, so before you put it into a bowl to rest, it needs to be finished off by hand to give it some strength and shape, and create the all-important 'top' and 'bottom'.

With the help of your scraper turn the dough out onto your work surface (without flouring it first), then, still using your scraper, skim it over the surface and alternatively work it a few times by slapping it onto the work surface then stretching it up and arcing it over itself a few times (as shown in Lesson 2). Very quickly it will become bouncy and full of life, with a smooth 'top'.

Lightly dust the surface of the dough and a clean bowl with flour. Put in the ball of dough, dusting the top lightly as well. Cover with a baking cloth and leave to rest for 1-2 hours until the dough is just under double in volume.

Have ready four baking trays lined with parchment paper.

Lightly dust your work surface with flour.

With the help of your scraper, turn the dough out onto your work surface.

Lightly flour your hands and with your palms gently flatten out the dough into a rough rectangle. With the long edge facing you, fold the top third of the dough into the centre and press down with the heel of your hand.

Fold the bottom third of the dough over the top, then turn the dough over so that the edge, or seam, is underneath. Dust lightly with flour.

With your scraper divide the dough in half lengthways. Seal the sticky, cut edges, and turn over so that the 'seam' is underneath.

Divide and weigh each length into 10 x 100g pieces (20 in all) and shape into balls by cupping your hand over the top and gently and quickly turning and smoothing the dough. Remember, don't flip the dough over, as you want to keep the smooth 'top' uppermost at all times.

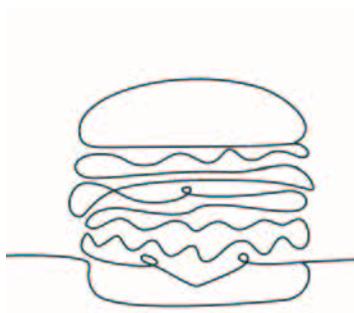
Place five balls on each of the baking trays, spaced well apart, cover with a baking cloth and allow to prove at room temperature for 45 minutes-1 hour until just under double in volume.

While the buns are proving, beat the egg and salt for the glaze in a small bowl. Pre heat the oven to 180°C. This is a lower temperature than usual, as the combination of enriched dough and egg glaze would cause the buns to burn at too high a heat.

When the buns have proved, brush a little of the egg glaze over the top of each bun. I like to do two thin coats, rather than one thick one which can result in egg dripping everywhere.

Put the trays into the preheated oven and bake for around 15-18 minutes until shiny and golden.

Remove from the oven and leave to cool.



12. Brioche

I love brioche. This classic enriched dough is very special. There are many different recipes and in France every bakery will have its own, sometimes using milk or crème fraîche in addition to eggs and butter. This is my recipe, which I have used for many years and has no milk, however the quantity of butter is almost half that of the flour, so it is a very rich dough.

Of course it is up to you whether you bake your brioche as a loaf or buns, or in a combination of shapes and sizes, but in this lesson I will show you how to make a large *brioche à tête*, the classic ball of dough, baked in a fluted tin, with a smaller ball for the 'head' on top; along with a trayful of little buns, shaped in the same way, together with some mini brioche loaves. The quantity also makes enough for a bigger brioche, in which the balls of dough are put into a 600g tin, and will grow and meld together as they bake, to form a beautiful bobby loaf.

Because brioche dough contains so much butter it needs a very light touch when you work with it, and it needs to be rested and proved in a cooler place than usual as you don't want the butter to seep out.

INGREDIENTS

Makes 20

12 large eggs
1kg strong white bread flour
30g fresh yeast
100g caster sugar
20g fine sea salt
400g unsalted cold butter,
slightly softened
(see tip opposite)

For the glaze:

2 eggs, beaten,
with a pinch of salt

With brioche it is more important than ever to think through what you are going to do before you start, as the more you handle the dough while you try to remember the next step, the more it is likely to sweat and become stickier and stickier. As a result the dough will become flatter and heavier instead of light and airy.

A good tip if you are making brioche in summer and your kitchen is warm, is to leave your butter in the fridge until you need it, and rather than soften it at room temperature, put it between two sheets of greaseproof paper and then bash it with a rolling pin: that way you have soft but cold butter, very quickly.

One of the techniques for brioche is to make the dough first without the butter, and then add it a bit at a time, but that can be tricky as you run the risk of the dough becoming too warm and the butter seeping out, so I am going to show you the easier way, which is to use a mixer with a dough hook and add the butter once you turn the speed up to medium. That way it becomes properly absorbed into the dough. Of course, as always, you can make the dough by hand, but as it is very sticky, and it is so important not to over-work it, I recommend using a mixer.

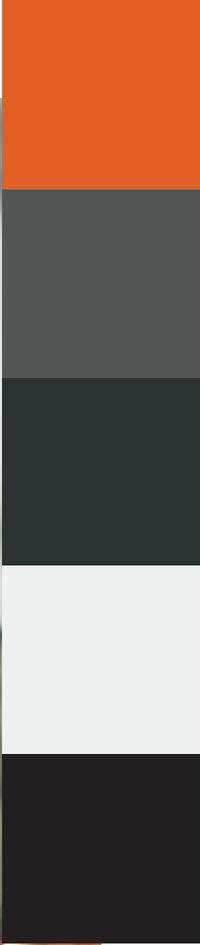
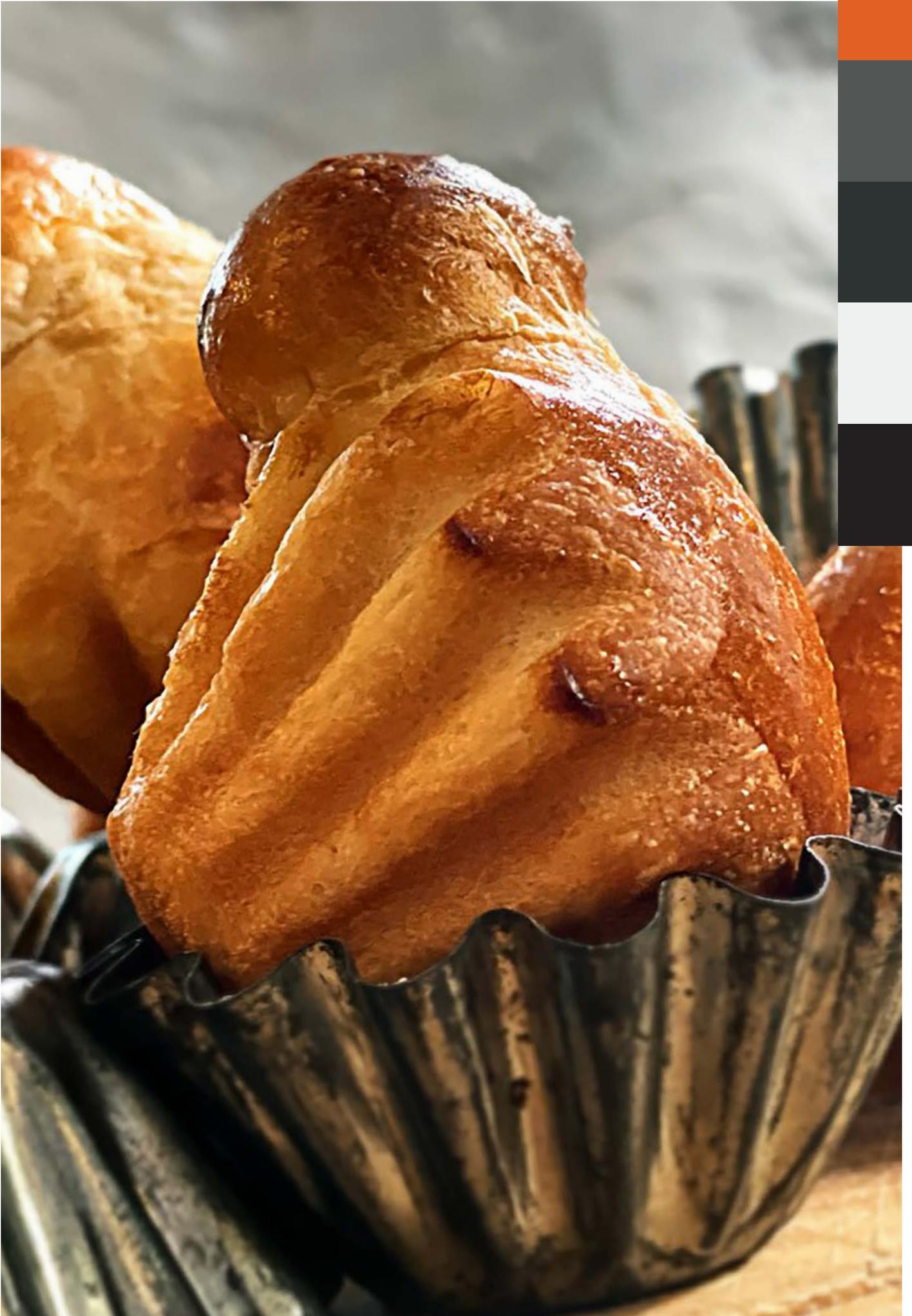
First put the eggs into the bowl of the mixer.

Have the flour in a separate bowl, then take the yeast, cover it in a little of the flour from your bowl and then rub it between the palms of your hands, as if you were washing them, so that the yeast crumbles into the flour. Add to your eggs, along with the sugar and salt.

Cut the butter into small pieces and have next to you ready to use.

Start off the mixer on slow speed for 4 minutes until all the ingredients are well mixed together and the eggs are properly incorporated. Now turn the speed up to medium and a little at a time add your butter. Be patient and let each addition become absorbed into the dough before adding the next piece.





Mix until all the butter is incorporated and you hear a flapping sound as the dough comes away from the sides of the bowl.

Use your scraper to release the dough around the sides of the bowl and turn it onto your work surface (don't flour it first).

The dough will be very soft and velvety, and as it is full of butter you need to treat it with a very light touch.

With your scraper just skim it over the work surface a little and already you will see the smooth 'top' forming. Very lightly fold the dough over itself a few times and tuck it in.

Dust the dough very finely with flour, then use your scraper to help you lift it into a clean bowl. Cover with a baking cloth and leave to rest for 2 hours – in a cooler place than usual, to avoid the dough warming up and the butter beginning to seep out – until the dough is bouncy and just under double in volume.

Lightly dust your work surface, and with the help of your scraper turn the dough out onto it. Lightly flour your hands and press the dough down gently into a rough rectangle.

With the long edge facing you, fold the upper edge over into the centre and press down. Fold the lower edge right over the top, then turn over so that the 'seam' is underneath.

To make it easier to divide the dough, use your scraper to cut it in half lengthways, tucking in the sticky exposed edges to seal them.

Now you need to shape your dough into balls. Again be very careful not to overwork them.

FOR THE LARGE BRIOCHE LOAF

You need a 600g loaf tin, well greased with butter.

With the help of your scraper, cut and weigh 600g of dough. Turn it over so that the 'top' is underneath. Press down very lightly, then fold the upper edge into the centre and press down. Turn through 180 degrees and repeat. Fold the upper edge into the centre one more time, then bring the upper edge all the way over to the lower edge and press to seal. Turn the dough over so that this 'seam' is now underneath.

With your scraper, divide the dough into six, then very gently cup your hand over each piece and roll over your work surface to smooth into a ball. Arrange the six balls in your tin.

FOR THE CLASSIC LARGE FLUTED BRIOCHE À TÊTE

You need a fluted 450g tin well greased with butter. Make sure you grease into all the indents.

With the help of your scraper cut and weigh 450g. Turn it over so that the 'top' is underneath then, to shape into a ball, take each 'corner' and fold into the centre, pressing down with your thumb each time. Turn over again, so that the 'top' is uppermost, and then roll lightly under the palm of your hand to smooth and seal.



Dust your finger in a little flour and press down in the centre to make a hole.

With the help of your scraper cut and weigh a second piece of dough of around 160g. Fold and shape into a ball in the same way, then turn the ball of dough onto its side, and gently press and roll your fingers across the base of it, stretching the dough as you do so to form a little 'tail'. Insert this into the hole you have made in the centre of the large ball and lift into your fluted tin.

FOR THE SMALL BRIOCHE À TÊTE

You need 6 individual fluted tins or a 6-hole brioche tray, well greased with butter – make sure you grease into all the indents.

With the help of your scraper cut and weigh 7 pieces of dough of around 60g each (this includes one piece to use for the 'heads'). Cup your hand over six of the 60g pieces and roll gently into a ball as above.

Use your scraper to cut the extra piece of dough into 6 small pieces (of around 10g each), roll into balls for the 'heads', creating a little tail on each as above, and assemble and lift into the tins.

FOR THE MINI BRIOCHE LOAVES

You need 6 mini loaf tins, approx 9cm x 6cm x 4cm.

With the help of your scraper cut and weigh six pieces of dough of around 80g each and shape and form into balls as above. Put a ball into each of the loaf tins.

Cover all the tins and trays with baking cloths and leave somewhere cool again for about 1 hour.

While the loaves and buns are proving, beat the eggs and salt in a small bowl for the glaze.

Pre heat the oven to 180°C.

Brush the loaves and buns all over with the egg glaze, in two thin layers, rather than one thick one.

If you like, for additional decoration dip the tips of a pair of scissors into some egg glaze and holding them at a 45 degree angle, snip around the edge of the large brioche à tête. For the mini tin brioche, make a series of snips in the tops down each side.

Transfer to the preheated oven and bake the large loaves for around 20-25 minutes and the smaller tins and trays for 8-10 minutes. Don't rely on a timer; keep an eye on them all the time until they turn a beautiful caramel brown.

Remove from the tins and cool on a wire rack.



13. Challah

The dough for the traditional Jewish celebratory bread is an interesting one as it involves honey and olive oil – I also like to add some butter to it, which brings it closer to the ‘brioche’ family of enriched doughs. The dough is plaited, which gives the bread its very individual look – in bakeries you might see simple or very elaborate versions. In this lesson I use two layers of plaits, which fuse together in the oven and, thanks to the egg glaze, the finished loaves turn a deep chestnut colour, as if they have been varnished.

INGREDIENTS

Makes 2

100g cold unsalted butter
500g full fat cold milk
2 eggs
100g good extra virgin olive oil
1kg strong white bread flour,
plus extra for dusting
40g fresh yeast
20g fine sea salt
120g honey

For the glaze:

2 eggs
a pinch of fine sea salt

To decorate (optional):

100g sesame seeds
or poppy seeds

Place the cold butter between two sheets of greaseproof paper and bash it with the end of a rolling pin to soften it a little.

Have ready two large baking trays lined with parchment paper.

Put the milk, eggs and olive oil into the bowl of a food mixer with a dough hook.

Have the flour in a separate bowl. Take the yeast, cover it in a little of the flour from your bowl and then rub it between the palms of your hands, as if you were washing them, so that the yeast crumbles into the flour. Add the flour and yeast to the bowl of the mixer, along with the salt, honey and butter.

Mix on slow speed for four minutes, then turn the speed to medium and continue to mix until the dough comes cleanly away from the sides of the bowl.

With the help of your scraper, turn out the dough onto your work surface (don't flour it first).

Very gently fold the dough over itself a few times and tuck it under to form a bouncy ball with a smooth velvety ‘top’.

Dust lightly with flour and put into a clean bowl. Cover with a baking cloth and leave to rest for around 1 hour until just under double in volume.

Lightly flour your work surface, and use your scraper to go around the bowl and release the dough so that you can turn it out in one go.

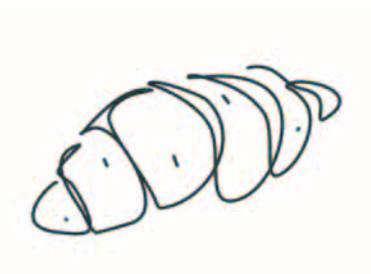
Flatten the dough gently into a rough rectangle.

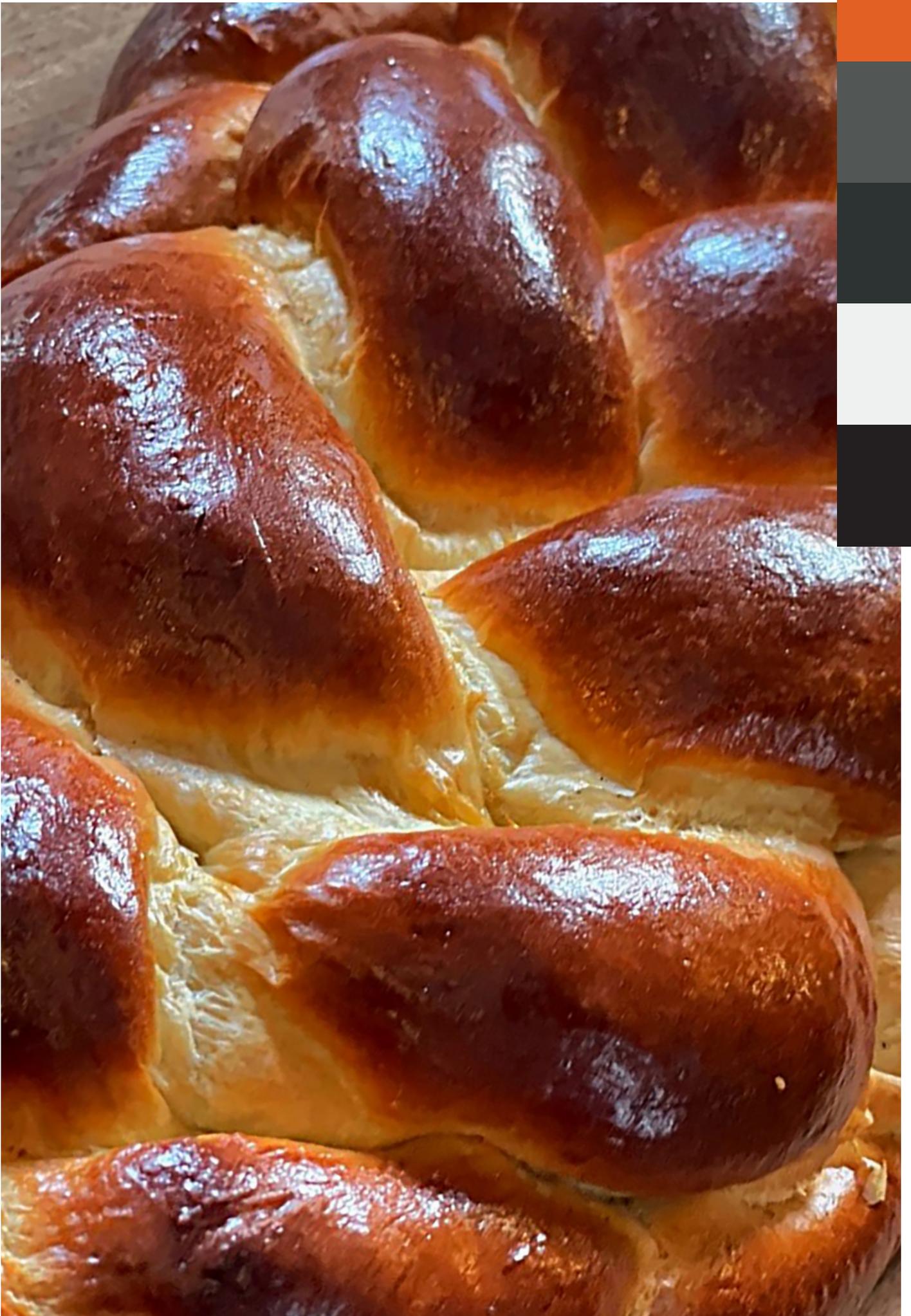
Fold the upper edge into the centre and press down. Fold the lower edge all the way over the top. Turn over so that the seam is underneath, and your ‘top’ is back facing upwards. Dust with flour.

With your scraper cut the dough in two along its length. Seal the sticky, cut edges and turn over so the sealed edges are underneath.

Now use your scraper to cut 14 x 140g pieces of dough.

Lightly flour your work surface again.





Take your first piece of dough and turn over so that the 'top' is now underneath, and flatten it into a rough rectangle.

Fold the upper edge of the dough into the centre and press down.

Turn the dough through 180 degrees. Again fold the upper edge of the dough into the centre and press down in the same way.

Now you need to bring the upper edge all the way over to the lower edge and seal with your fingers and thumb. Repeat one more time.

Roll lightly beneath your fingertips until you have a 'rope' of about 30cm long and 2cm in diameter, and press down a little more firmly at each end to form a point.

Repeat until you have 14 ropes in all.

For the base of each bread, take four of the ropes (top sides uppermost and seams underneath) and press together to join them at one end, then plait them. (If you haven't plaited with four strands before, then the video will show you how to do this.) Seal the ends of the ropes together and then roll each end of the plait lightly to bring to a point.

Repeat, but this time use just three of the 'ropes'.

Take a rolling pin and lightly press along the length of the 4-rope plait, in the centre – just enough to make an indentation. Lay the 3-rope plait into the space you have created, and gently roll the ends of each layer together to seal. Lift onto one of the parchment-lined baking trays.

Repeat with the second challah.

Cover both trays with a baking cloth and leave for about 45 minutes until bouncy and just under double in volume.

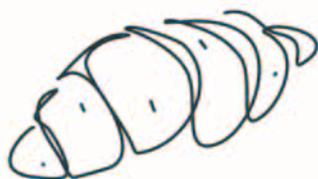
While the challah is proving, beat the eggs with the salt in a small bowl for the glaze.

Pre heat the oven to 180°C – the enriched dough will caramelise quite quickly so you need a lower temperature than for other breads.

Brush the top of the challah with the egg glaze and then sprinkle, if you like, with sesame seeds or poppy seeds.

Transfer the trays to the preheated oven and bake for around 20-25 minutes until the challah is dark golden brown and shiny.

Cool on a wire rack.



14. Babka Buns

INGREDIENTS

Makes 16-18 in muffin trays

200g unsalted butter
200g full fat milk
2 eggs
600g strong white bread flour
25g fresh yeast
50g caster sugar
10g fine sea salt
a little vegetable oil,
for greasing the muffin trays

These fun chocolate knotted buns are mini versions of the famous Russian plaited loaf. Again, the dough is enriched with butter, eggs and sugar, but it is quite firm, velvety and stretchy so it is very easy to work with.

Your friends will be impressed as the little knots look very complex, but in fact they are very easy to make – just don't tell them!

If you like, you can scatter a thin layer of crushed nuts over the chocolate once you have spread it over the dough. And if you want an extra burst of sweetness you can dust the buns in icing sugar once they have cooled down; or make a simple syrup by putting 100g caster sugar in a pan with 100g water. Bring to the boil, then turn down to a simmer until you have a light syrup. Brush over the knots while they are still hot, then allow to cool.

The recipe for chocolate crème patissiere will make more than you need, but it will keep for 3-4 days in the fridge – and you won't be able to resist making another batch of buns to use it up!

For the chocolate crème patissière:

3 egg yolks
60g caster sugar
40g plain flour
250ml full fat milk
1 vanilla pod
100g of good quality dark chocolate (54% cocoa solid), broken into small pieces

For the glaze:

2 eggs
a pinch of fine sea salt

FOR THE CHOCOLATE CRÈME PATISSIÈRE

Whisk the egg yolks and sugar in a bowl until pale and creamy. Add the flour and continue to whisk until smooth.

Pour the milk into a heavy bottomed pan. Slice the vanilla pod along its length using a sharp knife. Open out and scrape the seeds into the milk, then put the halved pods in too.

Place the pan over a medium heat and bring to just under the boil, then take off the heat and slowly pour half of the milk into the egg mixture, whisking well, before whisking in the rest.

Pour the mixture back into the pan, bring to the boil and continue to whisk for just one minute, then take off the heat, stir in the chocolate pieces until melted, and pour into a clean bowl.

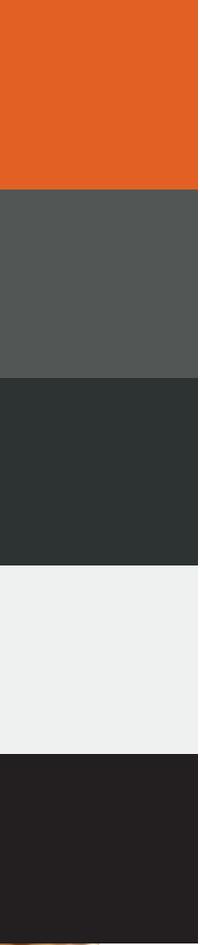
Scoop out the vanilla pod halves and cover the surface of the bowl with greaseproof paper immediately, as this will help to prevent a skin from forming. Leave to cool completely while you make the dough.

N.B. You can wash and dry the vanilla pods and use them to flavour a jar of sugar.

TO MAKE THE DOUGH

Place the cold butter between two sheets of greaseproof paper and bash it with the end of a rolling pin to soften it a little.

Put the milk and eggs into the bowl of a mixer with a dough hook.



Have the flour in a separate bowl, then take the yeast, cover it in a little of the flour from your bowl and then rub it between the palms of your hands, as if you were washing them, so that the yeast crumbles into the flour. Add the flour and yeast to the bowl of the mixer, along with the butter, sugar and salt.

Mix on a slow speed for four minutes until well mixed, then increase the speed to medium and continue until the dough comes away cleanly from the sides of the bowl.

The dough will be quite firm and smooth, not really sticky at all, so you don't need any flour on your work surface and you will be able to lift the dough out of the bowl of the mixer in one piece.

Handle the dough as little as possible. All you need to do is just gently roll it over itself a few times and smooth it into a round – it should be responsive and firm but bouncy to the touch.

Lift into a clean bowl, cover with a baking cloth and leave to rest for 1 hour until just under double in volume.

Lightly dust your work surface with flour and with the help of your scraper turn the dough out onto it.

Have ready two muffin trays, lightly greased with a little vegetable oil.

Press the dough into a rough rectangle with your fingertips and then, with a rolling pin, roll out until roughly the size of an A3 sheet of paper.

Have the long edge facing you and with a palette knife spread the chocolate crème patissière in a thin layer over the dough – don't be tempted to spread it too thickly or it will ooze out as you shape your buns.

Take the upper edge of the dough and fold into the centre. Then take the lower edge and fold it over the top. Pat down and very lightly roll over it once with your rolling pin to seal.

With a large, sharp knife, cut the dough in half widthways, and then slice each half widthways again into strips of roughly 3.5cm.

Take the first strip and turn so that the short seam-edge is facing you. Make two cuts down the length and open out to make three strands. Plait these together, then take the top edge of the plait and roll it down towards you – you will magically create the appearance of a knot. Put into your muffin tray, and repeat with the rest of the strips. Work as quickly as you can, before the chocolate gets too warm.

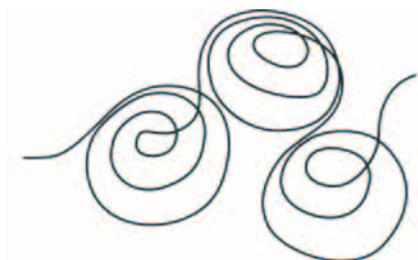
Cover with a baking cloth and leave to prove for around 45 minutes.

While the knots are proving, preheat the oven to 180°C and beat the eggs with the salt in a small bowl for the glaze.

Brush the knots with the egg glaze and put into the pre heated oven. Turn down the heat to 180°C.

Bake for about 12-15 minutes until golden – keep your eyes on them, as you don't want the buns to be overbaked. They should be nice and soft and gooey with chocolate when you bite into them.

Leave to cool for a minute or so in the trays and then transfer to a wire rack.



15. Green Pea & Chickpea Flatbreads

These are a quick and easy way of experimenting with different kinds of flours such as green pea, or chick pea, both of which are gluten-free. Use the breads as wraps or part of a mezze of ingredients for a starter. You can vary the oils along with the flours, add different herbs, perhaps sprinkle in some finely chopped chillies, or add some paprika – just take the idea and make the recipes your own.

The breads are cooked quickly in a pan, like crepes. I grease my pan in the way I used to watch my grandmother do it in Brittany: I take half a potato and spear it, cut side down on a fork, dip it into some oil, and then I just rub it all over the base of the pan. It is a great way of achieving just the right fine film of oil.

INGREDIENTS

**Makes around 8-10,
depending on the thickness
and size of your pan**

150g green pea flour

5g fine sea salt

30g avocado oil

320g warm water
(minimum – you may
need a little more)

a little vegetable oil,
for greasing the pan

GREEN PEA FLATBREADS

For these I use flour milled from marrowfat peas. It looks pale until you add water, and then it turns bright green and the smell is amazing. I love it combined with one of my favourite oils: avocado, which adds a beautiful flavour and richness, and the combination of the pea flour and the deep green of the avocado oil gives the batter a wonderful colour.

I like to roll these flatbreads up around a little salad of diced feta and avocado, mixed with some red piquillo chillies from a jar, chopped mint and black pepper, bound with a little more avocado oil – but they are also good with seafood, especially crab meat.

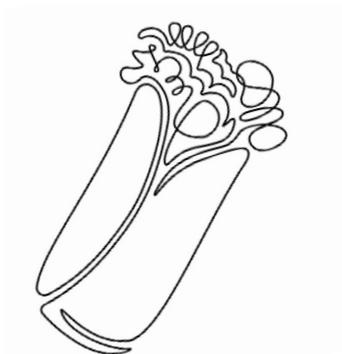
Have your flour in a bowl, add the salt and mix together. Add the avocado oil to your water in a jug and then whisk into the flour a little at a time.

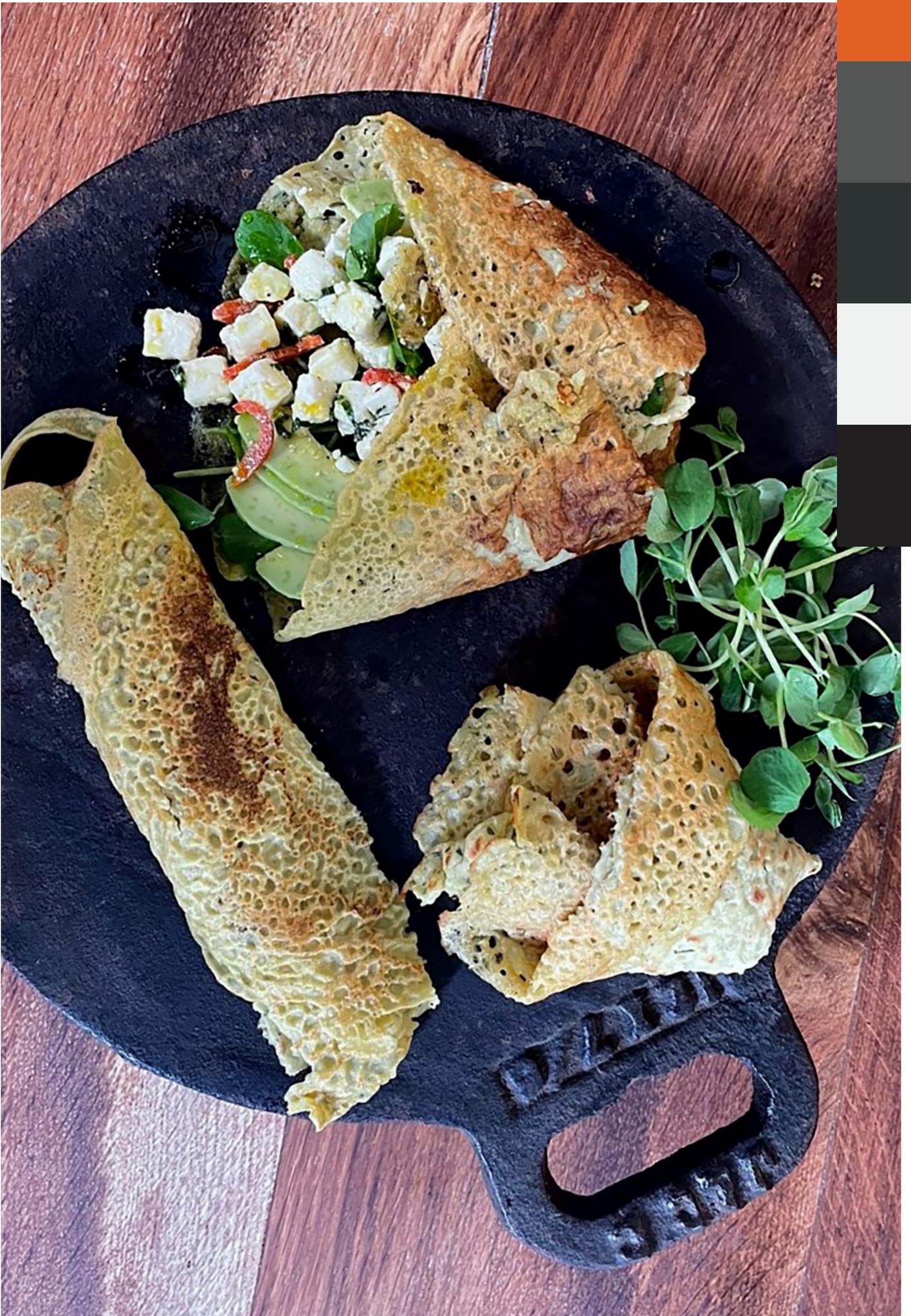
You want the consistency to be like that of a pancake batter, which will spread easily over the base of your pan, so you may need to adjust the quantity of water, according to how thick or thin you want your flatbreads to be.

Let the mixture rest for 15-20 minutes at room temperature.

Put a frying pan onto the hob and lightly grease with vegetable oil, then ladle in some of the mixture and swirl it around so that it is spread evenly over the base of the pan in a thin layer, like a crêpe.

Cook for about 1-2 minutes on each side until lightly coloured and repeat with the rest of the mixture.





CHICK PEA FLATBREADS

These are inspired by the *socca*, which is famous in and around Nice. Street vendors have these chickpea-flour flatbreads on the go all the time in massive pans, and they will cut off pieces, sprinkle them with rosemary, and hand them to you in a paper bag to eat as a snack.

The method is the same as for the green pea flatbreads, except that I add the sunshine flavours of olive oil, olives, rosemary and thyme. If you don't have fresh herbs you could add some dried oregano. Or you could add some dried or fresh chillies.

Again the flatbreads make great wraps, or accompaniments for the likes of griddled halloumi and a little hummus dusted with paprika, some chickpea salad, maybe some grilled red and yellow peppers, and more fresh olives – or whatever you like. Just add a glass of rosé and imagine you are in Provence!

INGREDIENTS

**Makes around 8-10,
depending on the thickness
and size of your pan**

150g chickpea flour

5g fine sea salt

30g extra virgin olive oil

320g warm water
(minimum – you may
need a little more)

a small handful of Kalamata
or Provençal olives, pitted
and finely chopped

1 tablespoon chopped
fresh rosemary and thyme

a little vegetable or olive oil,
for greasing the pan

Have the flour in a bowl, add the salt and mix together. Add the olive oil to your water in a jug and then whisk into the flour a little at a time.

As in the previous recipe for green pea flatbread, the consistency should resemble that of a pancake batter, which will spread easily over the base of your pan, so you may need to adjust the quantity of water, according to how thick or thin you want your flatbreads to be.

Add the chopped olives and herbs, and let the mixture stand for 10-15 minutes.

Put a frying pan onto the hob and lightly grease with vegetable or olive oil, then ladle in some of the mixture and swirl it around so that it is spread evenly over the base of the pan in a thin layer, like a crêpe.

Cook for about 1-2 minutes until lightly coloured, then flip over and cook on the other side for another 1-2 minutes. Repeat with the rest of the batter.

“

I just wanted to show people how simple it is to make beautiful bread from a few honest ingredients, and spread the message that baking is for everyone.

16. Cornbread

Strictly speaking this is a batter, which is a different kind of dough, and the advantage is that there is no resting and proving needed, so you can make it really quickly. Also this is a gluten-free recipe.

I must confess I never used to like cornbread much. I often found it to be quite heavy and dense. That is until I went to a chicken restaurant in Miami when on holiday with the family and they served the bread warm in a skillet with chicken wings. I enjoyed it so much I asked the chef how he made it, and when I came home I experimented and developed my own version adding some pecorino cheese and chilli. I have also made it with pieces of chorizo embedded into it – if you want to try this, just fry some small pieces first, and then add them to your mixture along with the cheese. I have used pecorino here, but you could use manchego, or whatever you like. Instead of the fresh chilli you could use some dried flakes, or paprika, if you prefer. The flavourings are really up to you.

This is a great, quick bread to put out in the summer if you are having a barbecue.

INGREDIENTS

**Makes 1 x 20-22cm cornbread,
enough for 6 servings**

100g unsalted butter
150g coarse cornmeal
(maizemeal)
75g gluten-free flour
2 teaspoons of gluten-free
baking powder
5g fine sea salt
2 medium eggs
100g yogurt or buttermilk
40g full-fat milk
25g maple syrup
70g pecorino cheese, grated
1 chilli pepper, finely chopped
(seeds and membrane removed,
if you prefer a little less heat)

Pre heat the oven to 200°C.

Put 30g of the butter into an ovenproof 20-22cm skillet and put into the oven for a few minutes – just long enough for the butter to melt and bubble up while you quickly make your dough – but keep an eye on it to make sure it doesn't burn.

Combine the cornmeal, flour, baking powder and salt in a mixing bowl. In a separate bowl, lightly beat or whisk the eggs, yogurt (or buttermilk) and milk, then add the maple syrup and quickly beat in. Add this liquid to the bowl of flour and stir together – you want to mix it as briefly as possible – until you have a thick corn-coloured batter that will look a little like polenta. Fold in the grated cheese and finely chopped chilli pepper.

Melt the remaining butter in a small pan then remove from the heat and stir into the batter.

Remove the skillet from the oven and with a spatula scrape the batter into it and spread it out to fill the pan, but don't smooth it down: leave it looking a little craggy.

Put into the preheated oven and bake for 20-25 minutes until lightly golden.

If you want to be sure that the cornbread is ready, insert a skewer or the point of a small sharp knife into the centre. It should come out clean.

Allow to cool down a little, but enjoy the bread while it is still warm.



17. Seeded Loaf

This is a very quick and simple bread to make. Packed with flavour, it is also vegan, dairy-free – thanks to the almond milk – and gluten-free, as again it is a batter rather than the kind of dough which needs strong white bread flour. It is jammed full of seeds and nuts, and though it feels quite dense it is beautifully moist and looks very impressive when you cut the slices to reveal the pattern of seeds and nuts inside. I especially like it for breakfast, with fruit, such as berries, good yogurt and honey.

You could use hazelnuts instead of walnuts, if you prefer, and sunflower seeds in place of pumpkin seeds. I like to use macadamia nut oil, which has a lovely flavour, but you can use cold-pressed rapeseed instead. It is really up to you.

You will need some baking parchment to line the loaf tin.

INGREDIENTS

Makes 1 x 900g loaf

100g blanched walnuts
180g rolled gluten-free oats
150g pumpkin seeds
100g flaxseeds
2 tablespoons chia seeds
1 tablespoon gluten-free baking powder
1 teaspoon fine sea salt
1 tablespoon maple syrup
3 tablespoons cold-pressed macadamia nut oil
430g almond milk
a little vegetable oil, for greasing the tin

Pre heat the oven to 190°C.

Grease a large loaf tin with vegetable oil and line it with baking parchment.

Put the nuts into a small bowl, and with the end of a rolling pin crush them into small, irregular sized pieces (the bread is more interesting if the nuts are not chopped uniformly, though of course you can pulse them briefly in a blender if you prefer).

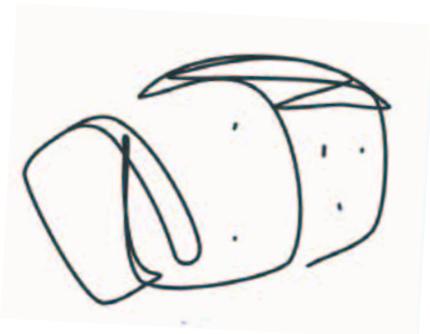
Have the rolled oats in a mixing bowl, add the seeds, crushed nuts, baking powder and salt and stir well.

In a jug mix together the maple syrup, macadamia nut oil and the almond milk. Add to the bowl containing the dry ingredients and stir really well to form a batter. Don't worry if it looks a little sloppy, as the liquid will become absorbed into the oats.

Spoon the batter into the tin, pressing it down very gently. Tap the tin on your work surface so that it settles, cover with a baking cloth and leave to rest for 30 minutes.

Put the tin into the preheated oven on the bottom shelf and turn the temperature down to 180°C. Bake for about 30–35 minutes until firm and slightly crisped on top, and a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean.

Leave the bread until completely cool before eating – this will take a while – and use a sharp knife to slice it.





18. Sourdough: Making the Ferment

Sourdough has taken on an almost mystical attraction over the last decade or so, but there is nothing mysterious about it. The dough is built on a ferment, or starter, just like many of the breads in the previous lessons, however, whereas those are made with a small amount of fresh yeast, the sourdough ferment is created entirely with natural yeasts, which are encouraged to grow and develop over several days. It is a slow and ancient art, perfected long ago, before industrial food processes. Think of it as similar to the traditional artisan process of making cheese, charcuterie, or beer. Time, patience, and experience are the keys as in all baking, but especially where sourdough is concerned, you never stop learning.

Your ferment is the soul of your sourdough, and you can continually refresh it, so that it will keep going for years, putting your own stamp on every bread you make from it. I still have the ferment I started 27 years ago in London. It lives in a big plastic container in the fridge, covered with a baking cloth and with an extra large freezer bag loosely over the top, so that it can 'breathe' and stay alive, and every time I need some I just take a piece of it. It develops and deepens in character and flavour over the years, and when I opened my bakery in Bath, all the breads we made were based on it. I swear I can recognize my bread anywhere, because I know the personality of my ferment.

There are any number of ways to start off your ferment, but the method I have given follows the way I started mine, very simply, with flour, a little spelt, warm water and honey. Try to find some good local honey which will contribute to the individuality of your ferment.

It is easier to work with a good quantity, so you will make more than you need initially, but in the lessons that follow I will show you how to freeze or dry some, and of course you can give some away to family and friends.

INGREDIENTS

150g warm water (at least 30°C)
1 tablespoon good honey,
preferably local
150g strong white bread flour
50g wholemeal spelt flour

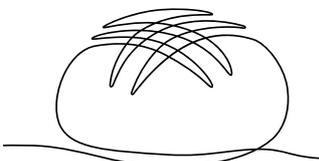
STAGE 1

Have your warm water in a jug and mix in the honey.

Combine the flours in a separate bowl. Add the water and honey and mix well with a wooden spoon until you have a thick porridge.

Use your scraper to tidy around the side of the bowl and pull the ferment together, then cover with a baking cloth, and put an extra large freezer bag over the top of that to keep the ferment nice and cosy and prevent any draught from getting in. Leave for 24 hours at room temperature.

After this time you won't notice a dramatic change, except that the surface will have begun to darken a little. Underneath it will be a beige colour and if you disturb it with a spoon you will see bubbles beginning to appear, which will pop slowly. This is a sign that fermentation has started – that is, you are ready to move on to Stage 2, which involves the first 'refreshing' or feeding the ferment to help it become more active.





INGREDIENTS

140g strong white bread flour
15g wholemeal spelt flour
75g warm water (at least 30°C)
200g of the ferment from Stage 1

STAGE 2

For this stage you will only need to use half of the ferment from Stage 1, but don't discard the rest, as you can add up to 300g of ferment per 1kg of flour (in addition to the yeast) to the simple white bread recipe in Lesson 2. The addition of the ferment will strengthen the flavour and structure of your dough.

Combine the flours in a bowl.

Have the warm water in a jug and pour it onto your ferment. Stir with a wooden spoon to dissolve it just enough to make it easier to mix in the flour – add this all in one go and mix well. The mixture will be quite firm now.

Tidy around the bowl with your scraper as always. Cover as before with your baking cloth and an extra large bag and leave for another 24 hours, in the same warm place.

After 24 hours things will be really starting to happen. The ferment will have grown and developed with bubbles forming on top and underneath it will be quite strong and stretchy. It will also smell sweet and lightly fermented.

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Sourdough is a slow and ancient art, perfected long ago, before industrial food processes.

INGREDIENTS

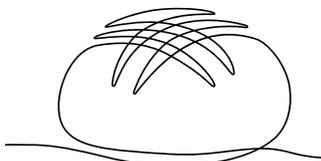
100g warm water (at least 30°C)
100g of the ferment from Stage 2
200g strong white bread flour

STAGE 3

Again, you will only use half of the ferment from Stage 2, but as before you can use up to 300g per 1kg of flour in another recipe (see above).

Add the water to the ferment and mix with your wooden spoon to dissolve it a little, to help the flour to mix in better.

Add the flour and mix – the ferment will be quite stiff and thick now. Scrape around the side of your bowl to tidy it and cover as before with a baking cloth and extra large freezer bag, and leave for another 24 hours. At the end of this time, the ferment will have started to rise, a little crust will have formed on top and if you pull it back you will see that the ferment resembles honeycomb inside: it will be strong, stretchy and sweet smelling, and you can move onto the final Stage 4.



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Remember, good dough makes good bread, and good dough requires time.

INGREDIENTS

200g warm water (at least 30°C)
200g of your ferment
400g strong white bread flour

STAGE 4

As before you will only use half the ferment from the previous stage, but you can use the other half to add to another recipe (up to 300g per 1kg of flour).

Add the water to the ferment in your bowl, as before, and mix with a wooden spoon. Add the flour and continue to mix.

The ferment will be really quite stiff now, so do as much as you can with a spoon, then use your scraper to help mix it. If it is easier, you can turn it out onto your work surface and just push it in on itself and roll it over a few times to bring it all together.

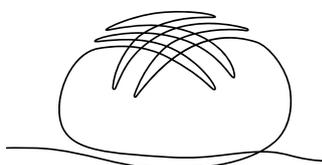
Transfer the ferment to a large plastic container. As I always say, when you have worked in a bakery one of the first things you learn is never to use glass, as you run the risk of it breaking, scattering shards into your ferment, dough, everywhere, but also if you use a plastic container you can see it growing without disturbing it.

Cover with a cloth and then an extra large freezer bag and leave it for a minimum of 12 hours at room temperature to make sure it is really active before transferring it to the bottom of your fridge (just covered in the freezer bag) for another 2 days, or up to 5, if you want to develop the flavour even more.

In the cold of the fridge everything will slow down and the ferment will mature gently and become more mellow with a good balance of sweetness and acidity.

You should now have 800g of ferment: the foundation – or scaffolding – for your sourdough.

Use 400g to make your first sourdough loaves, and keep another 400g to refresh for next time. You can also freeze some, give some away to family and friends, or use it to make sourdough crackers. I will show you how to do all of these things in the lessons that follow.



19. Sourdough:

Making the Bread

Now you are ready to use your ferment to make your sourdough.

As with all the recipes in this course, once you become confident, you can make your bread in any shape or size you choose, but for this lesson I am going to show you how to shape two classics: a 600g boule (round sourdough), and a longer oval shaped loaf, which in French is known as a *batard*.

You will need a 1kg round wicker proving basket for the boule and a 1.2kg oval-shaped basket for the *batard*, as well as two quite large wooden peels for transferring the loaves to the oven.

I make the dough using a mixer and keep back the salt at the start, only adding it halfway through mixing the dough. Salt tends to suck up moisture and can slow the action of the wonderful wild yeasts you have created in your ferment, so delaying its addition gives these the chance to develop first. Then, when you add the salt, it will have the effect of pulling the dough together.

I add a little malt powder (ground from roasted, malted wheat) to give an extra depth of flavour.

INGREDIENTS

**Makes 1 x 600g round loaf
(boule)
and 1 x 1.2kg long loaf
(batard)**

400g ferment
630g cool water
90g wholemeal spelt flour
1 tablespoon malt powder
700g strong white bread flour
20g fine sea salt

fine spelt (or strong white bread flour), for dusting

a little fine semolina,
for dusting the peels

Weigh 400g of ferment in the bowl of your mixer (with a dough hook). Add the water, the spelt flour, malt powder and then the strong white bread flour, but keep the salt back for now.

For this dough I use the same slow speed all the way through as I don't want to work it too hard in the mixer.

After about 5-6 minutes of mixing, add the salt.

Mix for another 5-6 minutes until the dough comes away cleanly from the sides of the bowl.

Use your scraper to help you turn out the dough onto your work surface (don't flour it first).

Following the techniques from Lesson 2, use the flat side of your scraper to gather the dough together by skimming it over your work surface. Very quickly you will see it begin to form a distinct 'top' and 'bottom' – the top will be smooth and shiny and the bottom underneath will still be sticky, so don't flip the dough over as if you skim, or you will bring all that stickiness to the surface.

Now slide your fingers under the dough, scoop it up and in one movement, turn your hands towards you, so that the dough swings, then slap it down 'tail first' onto the work surface. Stretch the dough upwards and outward, then forward, arcing it over itself like a wave.

Repeat this whole sequence four or five times and then skim the dough again, as above, before going back to the stretching and arcing sequence another four or five times.



Continue stretching and arcing, then skimming, and stretching and arcing again until you have a silky, shiny, bouncy ball of dough.

Now lightly flour your work surface with spelt flour and skim the dough very briefly again. Put it into a clean mixing bowl, cover with a baking cloth and leave to rest for 1-1½ hours until well risen and some large bubbles are beginning to form.

Next, to build some strength into the dough, you need to gently compress and de-gas it, by giving the dough some quarter turns as in previous lessons, but this time, you are going to leave the dough in the bowl while you do this.

Lightly flour the surface of the dough in the bowl, then use your scraper to tuck it in all the way around, so that you can slide your hands into the bowl on either side of the dough, and just lift it and arc it over itself, keeping the 'top' uppermost. Turn the bowl through 45 degrees anti-clockwise and repeat 4-5 times.

Use your scraper to tidy and tuck in the dough all the way round again, dust finely with a little more flour, cover with your baking cloth and leave for another hour.

After this time, repeat the folding and turning, then cover and leave for a further 45 minutes -1 hour.

Now you are ready to divide and shape the dough.

Lightly flour your work surface and the surface of the dough, then with the help of your scraper, turn it out onto your work surface.

Lightly pat the dough into a rough rectangle. With the longer side facing you, fold the upper edge into the centre and press down lightly. Then fold the lower half over the top.

Turn over so that the 'seam' is underneath.

Use your scraper to cut and weigh the dough into 1 x 600g and 1 x 1.2kg piece.

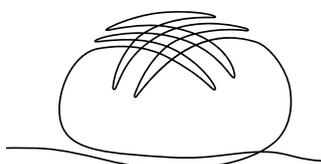
Now just gently fold each piece of dough over itself and tuck in neatly underneath, then leave to rest covered with a baking cloth for 10-20 minutes (maximum).

Meanwhile lightly dust your proving baskets with flour – you want enough to stop the top of your dough from sticking when you put in your dough, but not too much.

Add another light dusting of flour to your work surface if necessary.

For the *boule*, turn the dough over so that the 'top' is underneath, then, to shape into a ball, take each 'corner' and fold into the centre, pressing down with your thumb each time.

Turn over so that the 'top' is uppermost, and cup your hand over the ball of dough and roll gently to smooth it. Transfer it, 'top' side downwards, to your floured basket.



For the longer *batard* take the large ball of dough and turn it over so that the 'top' is underneath. Take the two corners furthest away from you and fold them into the centre. Press down with the heel of your hand. Now fold the upper edge of the dough into the centre and again press down in the same way. Turn the dough through 180 degrees and repeat.

Finally bring the upper edge of the dough all the way over to the lower edge and seal with the heel of your hand. Turn over so that this 'seam' is underneath. Transfer, 'top' side downwards, to your floured basket.

Cover each basket with a baking cloth and leave at room temperature for 3-4 hours to allow the dough to prove very slowly.

Next, slide an extra large freezer bag over the top of each basket and put into the fridge to mature slowly for 16-18 hours, up to 24 hours if you prefer. The cold stabilises the fermentation, stopping the dough from over-proving, and helps to deepen the flavour of the baked loaf. It also allows you the flexibility to bake your bread when you want, so you are not a prisoner of the risen dough!

Pre heat your oven to 230°C roughly 1 hour before baking. Put your stones or upturned heavy baking trays in to get very hot.

Have ready a spray filled with water to mist inside the oven.

Lightly dust your peels with fine semolina.

Remove the baskets from the fridge and tap each one lightly on your work surface to distribute the flour around the edges of the basket and dust the risen dough lightly on top, too. This will help to dry the surface of the dough as it will be slightly sticky from being covered with the freezer bags, and make it easier to turn it out.

Holding your hand gently against the top of the dough, like a buffer, turn the *boule* out onto your first peel and very lightly brush off the excess flour from the top. Repeat with the *batard*.

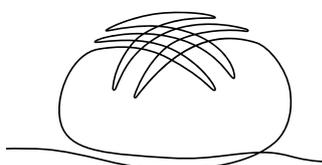
Now make some simple cuts in the top of each, using your lame.

For the *boule*, hold your lame with the blade at a 45 degree angle to the dough, keep the shaped loaf steady with your left hand (if you are right handed) and in one swift movement make a circular cut all around the top. For the *batard*, again keep your shaped loaf still and with your blade at a 45 degree angle, make three lines of short cuts in opposite directions along the length of the dough.

Slide the sourdough from the peels onto the hot stones or trays in the oven, and with the water spray, quickly mist inside. Avoid spraying water directly onto the dough, then shut the oven door. This fine misting will soften the tops of the dough, allowing the crusts to develop slowly and eventually burst attractively in the places where you have made your cuts.

After 10-15 minutes, once the crusts are beginning to form and the dough is beginning to take on a light colour, turn down the temperature down to 210°C and bake for a further 25 minutes for the *boule*, and about 5-6 minutes longer for the *batard*. You can turn the heat right down to 170-180°C for a last couple of minutes for the *batard*, just to finish off the crust without risk of burning. Again, keep checking, as you know your oven, and every one is different.

As always, keep an eye on the loaves and don't rely on timers. They are ready when the crusts are a rich golden brown and crunchy where you have created the bursts. The bases should also be dark golden brown and sound hollow when tapped.



Cool completely on a rack before eating.

20. Sourdough: Keeping Your Ferment Going

If you are going to be making bread on a regular basis, you will need to know how to use some of your ferment for your loaves and refresh the rest for your next batch of baking. You can then keep the process going for as long as you want to bake – I have kept my original ferment going for over 25 years!

The method I use for a stiff ferment like the one we developed in Lesson 18 is very simple. I use the same quantity of ferment to water and double the quantity of flour. So if you have 200g of ferment, you need to add 200g of water, and 400g of strong white bread flour. If you have 400g of ferment, add 400g of water and 800g of flour. Just scale the quantities to suit the rhythm of your baking.

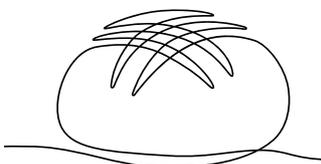
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Your ferment is the soul of your sourdough, and you can continually refresh it, so that it will keep going for years.

You can mix everything together in a mixing bowl with the help of your scraper, or if you want to use a mixer with a dough hook that is fine, but be careful not to overwork the ferment. Put in the water first, then the ferment and flour together and mix on a slow speed. It should only take a couple of minutes to gather the ingredients together. Keep watching and as soon as they have come together to form a rough mass, stop the machine.

Turn this out onto your work surface (without any flour) and just tidy and shape it into a round. Put it into a plastic container, cover with a baking cloth and then an extra large freezer bag loosely over the top.

Leave at room temperature for 4-6 hours to activate the ferment, and then put it into the fridge where the maturation will slow right down and the ferment will be good to use for 4-5 days before it will need refreshing again in the same way.



A man with glasses and a blue shirt is shown from the waist up, standing in a bakery. He has flour on his hands and is looking directly at the camera. The background shows a rustic bakery setting with a yellow pendant light and shelves of bread.

“

I never anticipated that teaching people how to make bread would be so rewarding.

21. Sourdough: Freezing or Drying the Ferment

When you have kept a sourdough ferment going for a very long time it becomes the DNA of your bread. If something was to happen to mine now, it would feel like a part of me would be missing! So, for insurance, I always have some in the freezer as back-up.

Freezing some ferment is so easy to do. Just flour your table very lightly (with strong white bread flour or spelt flour), take a lump of your ferment, roll it in the flour, put it into a small plastic container with a lid and then into the freezer. Now if anything should happen to the rest of your ferment, you still have some safe. You can defrost it, and then bring it back to life by refreshing it in the usual way: so for 200g ferment, mix in 200g water and 400g strong white bread flour, and then follow the process explained in the previous lesson.

Another, different, way to keep some of your ferment going as back-up, is to dry it and then blitz it into a powder. Not only can you use this in your breadmaking, but you can sprinkle a little into biscuits, pasta, or mix with breadcrumbs to give a depth of flavour.

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I have kept my original ferment going for over 25 years.

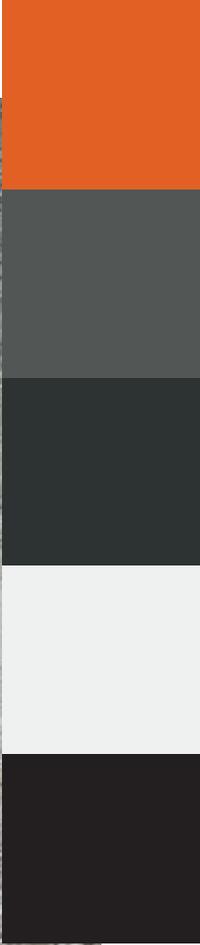
Lightly flour your table. Take a lump of your ferment, and with a rolling pin, roll it out as thinly as you can, turning it over after every few rolls, so that it doesn't stick. The thinner you can manage, the quicker it will dry.

Use your scraper or a knife to make some slashes in the ferment all over to stop it from inflating and help it to dry more quickly, then lift onto a flat baking tray lined with baking parchment.

The ferment needs to dry (uncovered) at around 35-40°C maximum for 18-24 hours, so you could leave it in a conservatory, greenhouse, or outside on a sunny day, or put it into a plate warmer or a dehydrator, if you have one, until the ferment is brittle enough to break easily into crisps. Pulse to a powder in a blender and then store in an airtight container.

Since people who come to my classes often ask me for some dried ferment to experiment with, I have started making a limited quantity after our sourdough sessions, which is packaged and can be sent out from our school in Bath – so to see how to bring your ferment back to life, I have given instructions at www.thebertinetkitchen.com





22. Sourdough Crackers

These are a great way of using up excess sourdough ferment. The crackers are beautiful with cheese especially, and if you keep them in an airtight tin, they will last a long time.

You can use any flour for dusting the crackers but I like to use rye, and you can bake them plain, or add some flakes of sea salt, or seeds. It is up to you.

INGREDIENTS

Makes 6 large crackers

a little rye or spelt flour,
for dusting

200g sourdough ferment

sea salt flakes, fennel seeds,
linseeds, or caraway seeds
(optional)

Pre heat the oven to 190°C and put in your baking stone or upturned heavy baking tray to heat up.

Dust your work surface in rye flour, or the flour of your choice.

Take your ferment, dust it in flour, fold it over itself a few times, then turn it through 45 degrees and fold it over itself a few more times. Roll lightly so you have a tight log of ferment.

Roll it in a little more flour, then with your scraper cut into pieces of about 1cm wide.

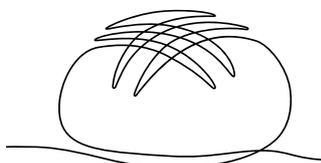
Dust the first piece in flour on all sides then roll out gently with a rolling pin, moving the piece of ferment after each roll, to stop it from sticking. The crackers need to be thin in order to bake very quickly, so roll out to around 10-12cm in diameter, then scatter with a little salt and seeds if using, and roll your rolling pin over the top to seal these into the ferment.

Either leave the round just as it is, if you are happy for your crackers to look rustic, or use a large cutter to neaten the edges. If you like, take a small cutter and stamp out a hole in the middle.

Repeat with the rest of the pieces of ferment. If you made holes in your crackers, you can gather up the pieces you have stamped out and roll out again to make an additional cracker.

Load the crackers onto a peel and transfer onto the hot stone or tray in the oven.

Bake for around 8 minutes, depending on the thickness, until the crackers have taken on a little colour and are completely dry and crisp.





23. Stollen

INGREDIENTS

Makes 6 small stollen

250g full fat milk
2 large eggs
500g strong white bread flour
25g caster sugar
10g fine sea salt
10g fresh yeast
100g unsalted butter
200g natural (un-coloured) marzipan, cut into 12 small pieces

For the frangipane:

125g unsalted butter, slightly softened
125g caster sugar
125g ground almonds
50g plain flour
2 eggs
2 large tablespoons rum

For the filling:

90g sultanas
50g natural glace cherries
100g mixed peel
30g toasted flaked almonds
2 tablespoons rum
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

For the egg glaze:

1 egg
pinch of fine sea salt

For the rum glaze:

250g unsalted butter
Small glass of rum

plenty of icing sugar, to dust

This is my indulgent take on a festive favourite. I love the Christmas flavours of stollen – fruit, almonds and cinnamon – but sometimes I find the texture can be a little dry, so I like to make mine with a dough enriched with eggs, butter and milk, and then introduce a little *crème d’amande* (almond cream), or frangipane as it is more often known, in addition to the traditional marzipan – just a little French *je ne sais quoi!* The frangipane adds a wonderful gooey-ness to the finished stollen.

I love *crème d’amande*. Every time I make it takes me straight back to my early days as an apprentice in the bakery, when my boss caught me in the big-walk in fridge with my finger in a big bowl of it – the aroma and the taste of it was irresistible, and I have made it in exactly the same way ever since. The secret is to add a little rum at the end. It not only adds flavour, but because it is made by distilling sugar cane it has the effect of bringing all the individual flavours together as one. Taste your frangipane before and after adding the rum and you will see what I mean.

Actually my stollen is laced with rum throughout! I use a splash, or several, to bind the fruit and nuts for the filling, and then the baked stollen goes into a bath of rum and butter before it receives its characteristic dusting of icing sugar – well, why not: it’s Christmas!

It is easy to make the small amount of frangipane needed for this recipe by hand, but if you are making a large quantity you can use a mixer with a paddle.

The quantities below would make two medium size stollen but I like to make smaller ones to give away as Christmas presents. Or if you want to keep a couple back for yourself to bring back festive memories later on, they freeze well, wrapped in a layer of wax paper followed by greaseproof paper.

TO MAKE THE DOUGH

First pour the milk into the bowl of the mixer (with a dough hook), then add the eggs, followed by the flour, sugar and salt.

Take the yeast, cover it in a little of the flour from your bowl and then rub it between the palms of your hands, as if you were washing them, so that the yeast crumbles into the flour. Finally add the butter.

Start off on slow speed for 4 minutes, then turn up to medium speed until the dough comes away cleanly from the sides of the bowl.

Meanwhile, mix all the ingredients for the filling together in a separate bowl.

Stop the mixer, add the fruit and nut mixture and mix on a very slow speed for just one minute... don’t be tempted to mix for longer as you only want to incorporate everything, without squashing the fruit, or you will have a sticky mess!

Very lightly flour your work surface, then use your scraper to lift the dough onto it, so that the smooth ‘top’ stays facing upwards.

Turn the dough over, so that the sticky side is facing you, then lift the top edge and fold the dough onto itself, press down, fold again and press down.

In one movement lift and turn the dough over and through 90 degrees so the short edge is facing you. Gather up any stray pieces of fruit or nuts and press into the dough, then repeat the folding and pressing two or three more times to build strength into the dough.

Use your scraper to tidy and tuck in the dough all the way round. It will still feel a little sticky from the fruit and rum, so dust the top lightly with flour and also dust a clean bowl.

Lift the dough into the bowl so that the smooth 'top' is facing upwards. Cover with a baking cloth and leave to rest for 1-1½ hours until well risen and some large bubbles appear on the surface. During this time all the flavours of fruit, nuts and rum will have infused into the dough.

TO MAKE THE FRANGIPANE

This is very simple, but the key is to add all the ingredients in a specific order, so in my classes I always tell my students to have everything lined up ready to go, to avoid mistakes!

Start with the butter. With a wooden spoon beat it well until it becomes pale, fluffy, and forms little peaks – a good tip is to spread the butter around the bowl as you beat; this helps it to fluff up more quickly.

Now beat in the sugar, and then add half the ground almonds. Mix in well, then add the rest. Next add half the flour, mix well, then add the remainder.

When the flour is all mixed in, beat in the egg. The dough should be stiff enough to hold its shape on your spoon if you turn it upside down. Add the rum and mix in well.

TO ASSEMBLE

Take the first piece of marzipan, squeeze it gently to soften and roll into a slim sausage shape. Repeat with the remaining pieces.

Lightly flour your work surface.

Use your scraper to run around the edge of the bowl to release the dough and turn it out onto your work surface, sticky side upwards.

Press the dough gently into a rough rectangle.

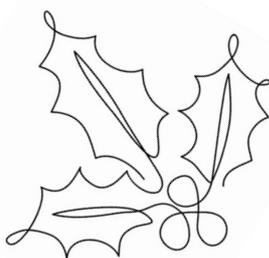
With the long side facing you, fold the top third of the dough into the centre and press down with your fingertips.

Fold the bottom third of the dough over the top, then turn the dough over so that the edge, or seam, is underneath. Dust lightly with flour.

Use your scraper to divide the dough into six pieces of around 220g each.

Lightly flour the work surface again. Take the first piece of dough and flatten it slightly with your fingertips, then lift and stretch it very gently into a rough oval shape.

Turn it over on your work surface so the rough side is facing upwards. Press down again lightly and move it around your work surface to pick up a fine dusting of flour.



Spread a tablespoonful of frangipane over the surface of the dough – don't be tempted to add too much or it may seep out during baking.

Take two of the marzipan 'sausages' and lay one near the top and one near the bottom of the oval of dough and press them in lightly. Take the top edge of the dough and fold it over the first piece of marzipan. Press down with your fingertips.

Turn through 180 degrees and repeat.

Finally turn the dough to face you vertically. Fold in each of the top corners, and then fold the top edge over and press down, so that the end is sealed. Turn through 180 degrees and repeat. Now all the filling should be well sealed in.

Repeat with the rest of the pieces of dough. Have ready three baking trays, lined with baking parchment then lay two shaped stollen on each tray, spaced well apart.

Cover the trays with baking cloths and leave to prove for 1-1½ hours until just under double in volume.

While the stollen are proving beat the egg and salt for the glaze in a small bowl.

Pre heat the oven to 180°C.

When the stollen have proved, brush each one all over in a thin layer of egg wash and then go back and brush with a second thin layer.

Put into your preheated oven (you may need to bake in batches) for about 18-20 minutes, until golden – keep checking on them every 5 minutes.

Take out of the oven and leave to cool down on their trays.

TO FINISH

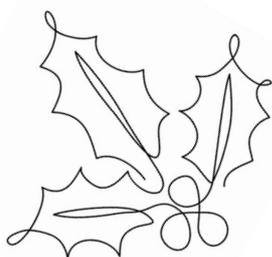
To make the rum glaze, gently melt the butter in a pan on the hob, then whisk in the rum.

Have the icing sugar in a large shallow tray or bowl.

Take each stollen in turn and bathe it in the rum butter so that it is soaked on all sides. Lift out and into the sugar, turning it over so it is completely dusted.

If you want to wrap the stollen to give as gifts or to put some in the freezer, the way I do this is to lay each stollen on a square of wax paper, bring the top and bottom edges together and fold twice, then fold in the corners and tuck them underneath. Then I lift the wrapped stollen onto a square of greaseproof paper and repeat.

Wrapped like this the stollen can happily go into the freezer, but if I am giving them as presents, I wrap them in a third piece of white wrapping paper in exactly the same way, and tie with some festive string – I use red and white butcher's string. Your friends will love unwrapping their gift to find something very special that you have made for them, full of the flavours of the festive season!





Next Steps

I hope that over the last twenty-three lessons in which we have baked together, you have achieved some great breads to share with your family and friends, and been inspired by the magical world of baking. I hope too, that you have begun to understand my philosophy on breadmaking, which all begins with the dough: the foundation of everything. Good dough makes good bread. Always remember that.

Touching, feeling and handling the dough with confidence; feeling at one with the dough and the way it responds; and learning to trust your senses and your judgement – these things come with experience, and experience comes with repetition, so try to get into a rhythm of baking regularly.

Each time you revisit a particular lesson I hope you will pick up an extra nugget of information, or feel more comfortable with a particular technique, so the next time you bake, some of that knowledge will translate into a beautiful baguette, brioche or sourdough loaf that will bring a big smile to your face. Your journey has only just begun, but I will be there with you every step of the way!



“

**What you need to make good bread?
I always say the three most important
things are your hands, your senses
... and patience!**



“

Il faut maîtriser la pâte.
Show the dough who's boss.

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