

# No-knead to press bread

by Sabine Eiche

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I've served you bread, as a word, in several of my columns. This time I offer not etymology, but crust and crumb – the real bread.

Some years ago a young American baker, Jim Lahey, devised a technique for producing a bread that tasted unlike any baked on this continent for the last hundred years or so.

The ingredients are the same as those for traditional bread – flour, yeast, salt, water – but the proportions, preparation and rising time are different. The amount of yeast is decreased and the amount of water increased. The dough is not kneaded but rises in a covered bowl at a cool temperature for 12-20 hours. It's baked in a cast-iron or ceramic pot with lid, placed inside the oven.

After the *New York Times* food columnist Mark Bittman wrote about Lahey's no-knead bread in 2006, it became an international sensation. When Debra Mikaelson, editor of *Edible Vancouver*, published her version of the bread in the winter 2013 issue, I decided to try it out myself.

By now there are several variations of the original recipe, but all seem to use white flour. I wanted a healthier bread with whole wheat (or other whole grain flours) and began to experiment. The results were so amazing that I felt driven to share my recipe.

Some preliminary remarks: flour is measured by weight because it's more accurate; ingredients in small quantities are by the spoonful; barley flour adds robustness (if you omit it, increase the other flour from 400 to 430 grams); using potato water instead of regular water is an old baker's trick; hands are best for

mixing; I usually prepare the dough at noon and bake it the following morning (my kitchen is very cool in winter, rising time will be shorter in warmer weather).

#### Ingredients:

400 grams whole wheat flour (I've also used 300 grams whole wheat, 100 grams spelt flour)

30 grams barley flour (optional)

1 ¼ tsp salt

¼ tsp dry yeast

400 ml potato water, room temperature

Stir flour(s) and salt in bowl, then stir in yeast. Add potato water, and using hands gently combine wet and dry ingredients. It should take about a minute. Dough will be very slack. Scoop up dough with wet hands and place in another bowl, previously rubbed with olive oil. Cover bowl with plastic film. After about an hour, using wet hands, fold slack dough once or twice. Repeat this two or three times over next 12-20 hours – important.

When ready to bake, place empty cast-iron or ceramic pot with lid in cold oven and heat to 500 degrees F (260 C). Pot heats up in about 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, form slack dough into ball, with seams side down in bowl. Sprinkle flour or cornmeal over top of dough and cover bowl.

Cut a square piece of parchment paper. When pot is hot, remove from oven, remove lid. Place dough, seams side up, on parchment paper, sprinkle flour or cornmeal over top of dough, and holding onto paper carefully lower it into pot. Replace lid and return to oven. After 30 minutes, remove lid and let bread bake

another 15-30 minutes until crust is deep brown and underside of the bread sounds hollow when tapped. Cool thoroughly on rack before slicing.