

# Plain White Bread

(Makes 1 large or 2 small loaves)

## Ingredients

1 lb 8 oz (700 g) strong white bread flour, plus a little extra for the top of the bread  
1 level tablespoon salt, or less, according to taste  
1 level teaspoon dried yeast  
1 level teaspoon caster sugar  
About 15 fl oz (425 ml) hand-hot water

You will need two 1 lb (450 g) loaf tins or one 2 lb (900 g) loaf tin, well buttered.

## Method

Sift the flour, salt, yeast and sugar into a bowl, make a well in the centre of the mixture, then add the water. Mix to a dough, starting off with a wooden spoon then using your hands in the final stages of mixing (make sure they're clean first!). Add a drop more water if there are still any dry bits.

Wipe the bowl clean with the dough and transfer it to a work surface (you may need to flour this if it starts to stick). Knead the dough for 4 minutes or until it looks shiny (it should also be springy and elastic). Return the dough to the mixing bowl, cover it with lightly oiled Clingfilm and leave until it has doubled in size (about 2 hours at room temperature).

After that knead again for 2 or 3 more minutes to get the air out. Divide the dough in half, gently pat each piece out to an oblong, then fold one end into the centre and the other in on top. Put each one into a buttered tin, sprinkle with a bit of flour, then place them in a polythene bag until the dough rises above the tops of the tins (about an hour at room temperature).

*Heat the oven to gas mark 8, 450°F (230°C).*

Bake the loaves in the centre of the hot oven for between 30-45 minutes (depending on whether it's one large loaf or two smaller ones). When they are done they should sound hollow when their bases are tapped. Take the loaves out of their tins (careful, they'll be VERY hot) and put them back in the oven (upside-down) for another 5 minutes to crisp the base and sides. Place them on a wire rack to cool down before eating.

