

SCALI BREAD (MY NEW FAVORITE BREAD!)

Inspired by a piece in SIFT magazine (issue NO. 7, spring 2017), this is my version of that recipe. Good for two free form braided loaves or two standard loaf pan loaves or a bunch of rolls or a couple of filled wreaths you decide! Great for sandwiches and toast.

Planning: this recipe calls for a starter (a mix of flour, water and a bit of yeast) made the evening before and rested at room temperature overnight. I've made this many times and have left the starter from 13-15 hours (depending on how lazy I am in the morning) before making the final dough. Batch weight ~1400 g / 3.1 lbs. NOTE: halve the recipe for one braid or loaf.

I'll describe the steps for sesame seed braided loaves and give some other ideas at the end.

Starter

- 200 g / 1.5 cups all purpose flour
- 60 g / 1/2 cup dark rye flour
- 200 ml cool water
- 1/2 teaspoon instant yeast

Dough

- all of the starter
- 320 g / 1 1/3 cups lukewarm water
- ~60 g / 1/4 cup olive oil (I use extra virgin)
- 440 g / 3 1/3 cups all purpose flour (I use King Arthur)
- 80 g / 2/3 cup white whole wheat flour (also King Arthur)
- 12 g / 2.5 teaspoons salt
- 32 g / 4 tablespoons nonfat dry milk powder (I use Bob's Red Mill)
- 12 g / 4 teaspoons instant yeast

Garnish (optional)

- a large egg white mixed with a tablespoon of water
- a cup of sesame seeds

the french tarte

the sweet taste of france

1. The evening before you plan to bake blend the starter ingredients in a medium bowl; cover and let rest at room temperature 13-15 hours.
2. Baking day: combine the starter with all of the ingredients in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook (I find my 6-quart is good for this quantity of dough) and mix together to make a soft, smooth dough. My regimen with a Kitchenaid: start on stir speed x 2 minutes; speed 2 x 5 minutes; speed 4 x 1 minute; rest in bowl about 10 minutes then do one complete fold (flatten dough, grab the right edge and pull over the top, then the left edge over, then top down, then bottom up) then turn and form a nice ball.
3. Place the dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover and let rise about 80-90 minutes. It will get pretty pouf-y!
4. Gently deflate the dough. For two free form braids, divide the dough into six ~233 g pieces. Shape each into a rough log and rest, covered, 10-15 minutes.
5. Place the logs onto a lightly greased surface and roll each into a 10-12" long rope.
6. Using three logs per braid, brush each with egg white mixture and sprinkle/roll the ropes thoroughly in sesame seeds.
7. Place three coated ropes on the work surface, pinch the ends together at the top then do a typical three-strand braid, tucking the ends under to shape a neat loaf. Repeat with the other three ropes for the second loaf.
8. Place each braid on its own parchment lined baking sheet, cover with lightly oiled film wrap and let rise about 90 minutes until puffy.
9. Toward the end of the rise, heat the oven to 425°F (400° convection); if using a baking stone, heat it in the oven as well. NOTE: I bake one braid at a time on my stone - otherwise too crowded!
10. Bake 25-30 minutes until golden brown. Cool and enjoy.

Here are a few other ways I've baked this dough - you can see these examples highlighted on my blog post "One great bread a few different ways", posted late January, 2023.

- use grated cheese instead of sesame for a delicious cheese braid
- form half the dough as a free-form torpedo style loaf and the other half as rolls
- bake 2 standard loaf pan loaves for a more traditional sandwich bread
- bake 2 or 4 free form boules (divide as you wish!)
- ricotta herb filled wreath

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