



The Laurel's Kitchen Bread Book: A Guide to Whole-Grain Breadmaking

Laurel Robertson, Carol Flinders, Bronwen Godfrey

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The Laurel's Kitchen Bread Book is the classic bestselling cookbook devoted to baking light, healthful, delicious bread entirely from whole grains. This specially updated edition includes an entirely new chapter on making excellent whole-grain loaves in a bread machine. Now even the busiest among us can bake the delectable loaves for which Laurel's Kitchen is famous.

New research proves what we've known all along: Eating whole grains really is better for your health! Here, the switch from "white" is made fun and easy.

Like a good friend, the "Loaf for Learning" tutorial guides you step-by-step through the baking process. You'll make perfect loaves every time, right from the start.

Here you'll find recipes for everything—from chewy Flemish Desem Bread and mouthwatering Hot Cross Buns to tender Buttermilk Rolls, foolproof Pita Pockets, tangy Cheese Muffins, and luscious Banana Bread—all with clear explanations and helpful woodcut illustrations.

The brand-new chapter on bread machines teaches you to make light "electric" loaves from whole-grain flour. No matter what your schedule, you can come home to the wonderful smell of baking bread, fresh, hot, and ready to enjoy.

The Laurel's Kitchen Bread Book: A Guide to Whole-Grain Breadmaking Details

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Sara says

Ah, Laurel's Kitchen. So much fun to read! I think the only item I made out of this cookbook was the English muffins and the recipe was quite sketchy. Kind of a go-into-the-kitchen-and-put-a-few-things-together-and-see-if-turns-out kind of recipe. I didn't care. I was having fun, getting into the mood.

A good cookbook if you like to read stories. Not the greatest cookbook for a beginning baker, but it does have some pretty good tips.

I don't own it, so I can't read the entire thing. Might be one to put on my list of "I need to buy this some day".

Sarah Haman says

Changed my entire attitude toward bread making. Will use this for a long time!

Shannon says

A boat load of information presented in a candid and encouraging way. So far, I'm surprised at the very nice results from the recipes that I have tried. The recipes make great sandwich bread and quick bread.

I wish she listed the final temperatures for cooked bread and I wish there were some photos instead of/in addition to the black and white drawn illustrations.

Daisy says

Re-opening this book: I am on Day 5 of my first desem.

Not that you can ever be finished with this book, but I've read all the informational pieces once so far. It's so comprehensive that I'll use it as a reference book as well as a recipe book. I'm especially eager to attempt the desem. And I particularly like how there's a section urging people gently to make time for bread-baking in their lives: *"... what seems to happen to a lot of people is that over time they draw more satisfaction from their bread-making. As its importance in their lives increases, some competing activities can begin to seem less necessary. Slowly, priorities reorder themselves, and your determination to make your own bread even on a tight schedule becomes a steady impetus that leads naturally and mysteriously to a more home-centered and tranquil life."*

Ahhhh.

Emily says

If you would like to learn to make wheat bread, or currently make wheat bread but aren't happy with how it turns out, then this book is an excellent resource. It provides clear instructions for beginners. I have tried three recipes from the book and they are all good. My breadmaking has definitely improved from the techniques Laurel outlines.

Brenda Funk says

As Laurel's Kitchen, this one also has a lot of reading to do....I am busy researching the art of bread baking with whole grains that I am milling myself. Part of what I love about these books is that they have a lot about the philosophy of food and making your own food for those you love. Something we have lost to a large extent in the busy society in which we live.

Amelia says

I had this book out from the library for a month and a half before I bit the bullet and bought it. During that time, I've made bread about twice a week, maybe a little less. This book has gotten me comfortable with whole-grain bread baking, and the explanations in the "Loaf for Learning" section have helped me tweak quantities and rising times as needed, which is something I wouldn't have known how to do otherwise. I also tried a recipe from Peter Reinhart's Whole Grain Breads in the middle of all that. While I might give Reinhart's techniques a try again in the future, I found the methods and instructions in Laurel's Kitchen Bread Book much more accessible as a relative beginner, and would recommend this as a starting point for others interested in making their own bread.

Tripleguess says

This is a great book to start the beginner off in baking whole wheat bread.

It's important to read the first chapter or two, where the author gives definitions for terms that will be used throughout the book ("warm" = so many degrees F, "very warm" means about 90d Farenheit, etc). Otherwise you may flip to a recipe and say "What the heck? How do I know how warm the 'warm place' for letting the bread rise ought to be?"

My favorite recipe is the overnight started sponge bread. I mill wheat the night before, start the sponge, then knead in the rest of the ingredients in the morning and let it rise at room temperature (about 70 degrees F). So I don't have to make any special heating arrangements, I can work on other projects between pressing the bread down and putting it in the oven, and the bread is done in time for a late dinner or for breakfast the next day depending on when I staggered out of my room that morning.

I haven't tried nearly all the recipes, but the most valuable part of this book for me has been the techniques it taught. I tried to make whole wheat bread before I knew about this book but had no idea what I was doing, so I worked very hard only to get bricks and puddles. Then... I stumbled across this book on a library shelf, and

the rest is history. Highly recommended.

The date read is a guess, by the way. ^^; I've had the book for several years now.

Alice says

I have only tried the first "for learners" bread recipe, but it turned out wonderfully. This book has so many helpful tips that I'm going to apply to my regular whole wheat bread recipe. I discovered that I've been under kneading and over flouring. No wonder my bread was always crumbly!

Inder says

Sigh. The bread wasn't nearly as good as my usual (modified) Tassajara loaf. It was, in fact, much denser and more brick-like. Of course, with bread, there are so many variables, you can't necessarily blame the recipe.

Okay, I can. You know what I think the problem is? No sponge. (Only serious bread-baking nerds will have any idea what I'm talking about now.)

Mark my words: 100% whole wheat bread should be started with a sponge.

However, that was one loaf, and this is still a great book. I'll still cherish the idea of baking every week while organizing my life on the side. You still get four stars from me, Laurel ... we'll bake together again.

(However, if you're new to bread-baking, the Tassajara bread book basic whole wheat recipes, with a few modifications - feel free to contact me regarding same - is still the way to go.)

I have long been loyal to the Tassajara Bread Book, since that's the book my mother used when I was a child. However, I was very impressed by Laurel's introduction to this book. Essentially, she says that back in the 60s, when she wrote Laurel's kitchen, even the hippy foodies believed that a 100% whole wheat bread would be heavy as a brick, and it needed to be cut with white flour to be bearable. Well, this is in fact what I learned growing up on a commune, so I can vouch for this history.

But over the years, using trial and error, I've learned how to make lighter, fluffier whole wheat bread, using techniques talked about in the Tassajara bread book, but never fully discussed as such. I've learned that "quick" bread is the culprit (to say nothing of bread machines - God forbid) - the more kneading and rising, and the longer the whole thing takes, the better the bread. Quick white bread may be possible - but quick whole wheat bread is an anathema. Did our ancestors, who spent, what, 6,000 years perfecting yeasted bread, make "quick" or "no-knead" bread? Absolutely not. Who are we to think that high-technology could perfect a thing already so perfected? (As you can see, baking bread is not just baking - it's a political statement.)

Laurel's experience jibes with mine, it turns out. Also, she claims that she has further perfected (in the sense

of - returned to the roots of the whole process) whole wheat bread to the point where it's as light and fluffy (but more flavorful) as white bread!! Well, that's quite a claim, and there's only one way to find out - the dough is in the oven right now, rising under the pilot light. By tonight, I'll be able to say whether she exaggerates.

However, she's getting a tentative five stars from me, for now, because I love the writing! She's funny and self-deprecating and real. I love the chapter about how to fit bread making into a busy lifestyle - her suggestions just might work! Forget about organizing my crap - maybe I'll just make bread every week instead. I mean, come on - priorities!

(However, since most of the time you spend baking bread it's actually just sitting and rising or baking (at least four or five hours, in my experience), I could have an immaculate house and productive garden in the time it takes to make bread every week. Baking the bread could be the BASIS for an orderly, lovely home.)

Amy says

This is an absolutely wonderful guide to baking bread with whole grain flour. After buying a grain mill for my kitchen so that I can grind my own fresh, whole grain flours, I found this book recommended by people in baking forums. They were right!

I couldn't be happier with the recipes and how my breads are turning out. Everything I've made from it has been delicious and it does a great job of talking through what to expect during the bread-making process.

Phillip says

This book is very good! Some of the things that I like the best: great recipes, all the recipes use 100% whole wheat, techniques are explained (windowpane test, poking test for raising, etc) instead of just giving times (which could vary due to conditions), and measurements are given by mass (not volume). The only downsides that I've found so far are that there are a few recipes that have confusing cooking times (or no cooking times at all).

S.N. Arly says

I've been playing with bread for a few years now, and this is a terrific book for beginners and those branching out into whole grains. For new bakers it includes the science behind bread. It demystifies the process and helps you identify when something is going wrong and how to fix it. For the more adventuresome or experienced bakers, it delves into some complicated recipes and offers knowledge and skills to develop your own breads.

Colleenish says

This was a random book that my mom had. It's apparently one of the very very first vegetarian cookbooks.

But it was also a lot more. It was a long book so it talked about health, the role of food, vegetarianism, nutrition, and homemaking. I will not be giving up meat or eating soybeans any time soon, but this book did inspire a lot of thought about food and nurturing. I'll leave you with a final caution: reading about food, even diets, makes me so hungry that I raid the kitchen.

Cindi says

I read this book about eleven years ago, gave whole grain baking a go and then gave up after many tries. About three years ago, I decided it was time to try again. I found that it had been my flour that was the problem all those years ago. What a relief because this bread is wholesome and delicious. I love the methods that Laurel uses with her bread and use them when I can with any other bread recipes that I use. I've tried several of the recipes in the book and my family and I love them all. I go in spurts with bread making. With the current prices of food, I'm grinding my own wheat and making my own bread whenever I can.

I highly recommend this book for making whole grain bread. You won't believe how delicious it is!!
