

Meslin Bread

This bread was made from a mixture of flours based on wheat flour and one or two other grains. Rye was commonly used and Barley was another cheap mixer. In Tudor times, club wheat or common wheat would be used to make stoneground flour.

Ingredients

- 500g stoneground wheat flour
- 500g rye flour
- 1 tsp ground sea salt (exclude for cheapest breads)
- 1 litre warm water (30-40°C)
- Sourdough starter (or 6g dried yeast and teaspoon of sugar)

Mix the dry ingredients in a large bowl. Add the sourdough starter and most of the water and mix into a stiff dough. Allow to prove for an hour, then knock back and knead thoroughly. Using a large baking tray, form into a round loaf. Allow to prove for a further half hour. Bake in a hot oven (230°C) for 45 minutes, reduce the temperature by 10°C every 10 minutes. Allow to cool before using.

Meslin bread is messy to knead as the ingredients are low in gluten. With a Rye flour mix, the dough has a sticky texture and will not easily show resistance when fully kneaded. As the bread rises, the top crust will tear and split. This will give the bread a rustic look when baked. Coating the dough with water, milk or egg mix will not stop the crust splitting, but will give a better overall finish. This is not something that would have been routinely done with this type of bread.



The bottom of this type of loaf can be cut off to about 2.5 cm deep and used as a trencher plate at table. In wealthy households, food would be eaten from the bread trencher and after the meal the plate would be given to the poor as a charitable hand-out of food.

