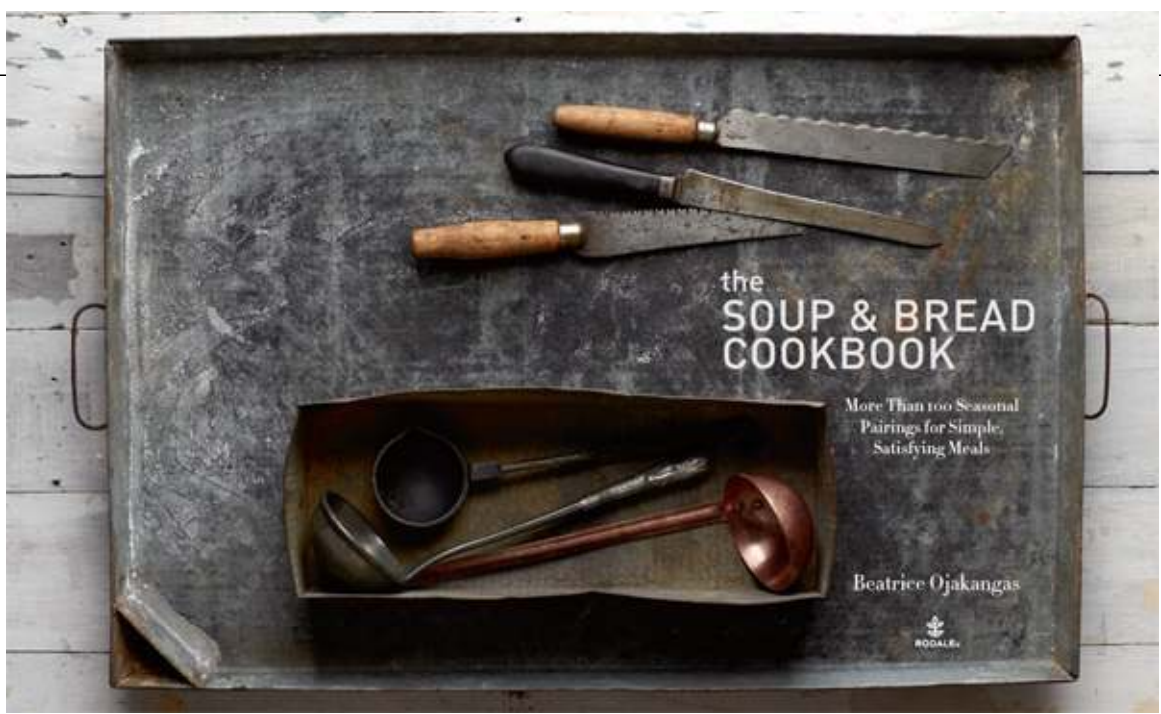


the SOUP & BREAD COOKBOOK

More Than 100 Seasonal Pairings for Simple, Satisfying Meals



Beatrice Ojakangas



the
**SOUP & BREAD
COOKBOOK**

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To my amazing family:

My husband, Dick Ojakangas

My children and their **spouses**,
Cathy and Nicho **Hatsopoulos**;
Greg and **Tracie Ojakangas**;
Susanna and **Peter Elliott**

My **grandchildren, Niko**, Tomas,
and **Isabella Friehs**; Kieran, Celka,
and **Lian Ojakangas**;
Frans and Kaisa Elliott

And also to:

True lovers of soup and
homemade bread





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Acknowledgments

Nothing comes to fruition without the encouragement of friends and family. First of all, thanks go to my husband, Richard, who encouraged me every step of the way, and to my circle of friends who kept tabs on my progress and were willing tasters.

A special thanks goes to the many volunteers who have assisted me in producing the soup and bread suppers at our church during the Lenten season over the years. The kitchen there is such a fun place to be; we continue to broaden the menu every year and take great pleasure in circling the globe culinarily speaking.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my agents, Jane Dystel and Miriam Goderich, for believing that I could come up with yet another cookbook. To the folks at Rodale, a big thank-you for embracing soup and bread. Kathleen Hackett, my gentle and knowledgeable editor, has coaxed a thick manuscript into the beautiful pages that follow. Kara Plikaitis conceived of the lovely design, Hector Sanchez shot the gorgeous photographs, Mariana Velasquez prepared the lovely food, and Hilary Robertson provided exquisite styling throughout.

This is truly how miracles are made!



“It is impossible to think of any good meal, no matter how plain or elegant, without soup or bread in it.”

—M. F. K. Fisher

When I was a young girl, my mother offered up what could be credited as the inspiration for this book. She suggested that I could never go wrong when eating out if I simply ordered soup from the menu. And with that soup, there would always be some kind of bread or cracker worth noting. I’ve been sampling soup from around the world ever since. My “soup travels,” however, are firmly rooted in the rhythm of the seasons in Minnesota, where I live. I take most of my inspiration from what shows up in the farmers’ market and in the local organic foods store. Availability and seasonality both drive my choices, but so do holidays and the mood a certain time of year cultivates.

In general, I lean toward lighter menus. In spring, for example, I create special soup and bread combinations for Easter and Mother’s Day. It’s easy to go light when greens such as sorrel, mustard greens, and asparagus begin showing up in the markets. Once summer arrives and the temperature soars (yes, even in Minnesota), I want to chill everything! The warmer months bring a bounty of wonderful fresh farm-stand produce—all of it fair game for turning into cooling soups. Wild mushrooms pop up in the forests surrounding my home come autumn, and glorious piles of colorful root vegetables beckon at the farmers’ markets. In winter, I rely on vegetables that can be stored or preserved, whether dried, frozen, or canned.

Nowhere is cooking to the rhythm of the seasons—which ultimately becomes tradition—more obvious to me than in northern Europe. For instance, spring and summer in Finland mean that cream of salmon soup served with a chewy dark rye bun is on the menu. In fall, wild mushrooms dominate the soup selection, and a hearty split pea defines the winter season. All over the world, bread in some form—flat, quick, loaf, cracker, biscuit, stick—is also part of a soup tradition. In France, seafood bouillabaisse is invariably paired with crusty bread; a cheese roll is tucked next to a bowl of *ajiacó*, a chicken soup, in Colombia.

Wanderlust is in my blood, and many of the soups and breads that appear in this book trace a path around the globe, inspired by the ministries my church supports in many parts of the world. To bring awareness to these ministries, we host a global mission meal once a year. To represent Petrozavodsk in Russia, we made borscht and black bread. El Salvador inspired a red kidney bean soup with *popusas*. Malaysia’s menu turned out to be an Asian-style vegetable soup with spring rolls. Most of what’s offered here, however, are just soups we have enjoyed over the years and breads that I’ve found go well with each one. The duets are not necessarily carved in stone—of course, you can switch the bread/soup combinations however you wish.

A recent holiday invitation from two dear Finnish friends sums up the warm feelings I have had all my life for the humble pairing of soup and bread: “A crust of bread, a bowl of soup, a warm sauna, and a bed await you in our home. Come to visit us in this beautiful northland! Joyfully, Antti and Jane.” Breaking bread and sipping lovingly made soup would have been enough, but the sauna and the

northland were the swirl of sour cream in the soup! My hope is that after preparing some of the recipes here, you'll feel the same way.

“You can do almost anything with soup stock; it’s like a strong foundation. When you have the right foundation, everything tastes good.”

—Martin Yan

They are terms that are often used interchangeably, but a stock and a broth are in fact two different things. Perhaps the confusion lies not only in the similar way the two are used—as a base for soups—but in their makeup. Both are basically flavored water, with meat and/or vegetable herbs, and spices long-simmered in the liquid. But there actually is a difference between stocks and broths in that technically, stocks are prepared with bones while broths are not. But that distinction is rarely made in most recipes. I’ve developed three basic stock recipes and one broth recipe that are called for throughout this book.

Like many cooks, I occasionally don’t have my own homemade broth or stock on hand, and have no problem using good-quality boxed or canned versions when time is tight. I prefer them to cube dried powders, or pastes because their flavors are more intense, they’re lower in sodium, and they typically do not contain preservatives and additives.

Prepared stocks and broths are usually packaged in 32-ounce boxes that measure 4 cups or 4-ounce cans that measure 6 cups. Canned stocks and broths usually come in 14.5-ounce cans that measure 1¾ cups or 48-ounce cans that measure 6 cups. Once opened, they are safe to keep refrigerated, for about 1 week. If you aren’t planning to use prepared stocks and broths within that time, pour the liquid into ice cube trays or resealable plastic bags and freeze for later use.

BASIC CHICKEN STOCK

ROASTING THE CHICKEN BONES GIVES THE STOCK A RICH FLAVOR. I LIKE TO FREEZE IT IN 2-CUP PORTIONS IN RESEALABLE PLASTIC BAGS AND STACK THEM UP LIKE TILES IN THE FREEZER.

Makes about 2 quarts

4 pounds chicken necks and bones
3 large Spanish onions, unpeeled, ends trimmed, quartered
6 ribs celery, cut into 2" pieces
3 large carrots, cut into 2" pieces
1 tablespoon olive oil
1½ teaspoons salt
½ teaspoon ground black pepper
4 quarts cold water
2 bay leaves
¼ cup black peppercorns
Stems from 1 small bunch flat-leaf parsley
6 sprigs thyme

PREHEAT the oven to 450°F. Combine the chicken necks and bones, onions, celery, and carrots in a large roasting pan. Toss with the oil and sprinkle with the salt and pepper.

Roast until the chicken and vegetables are golden brown, 30 to 40 minutes.

Transfer to a large stockpot and add the water, bay leaves, peppercorns, parsley, and thyme. (The stock can also be made in a slow cooker—see [“Tips for Making Broth or Stock in a Slow Cooker”](#)—if you wish to leave the stock unattended.)

Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to medium, and simmer for 4 hours. Using a slotted spoon, skim away and discard any foam that rises to the top.

Remove from the heat and strain through a colander lined with a dampened piece of cheesecloth.

TWO-FOR-ONE CHICKEN STOCK

MAKING YOUR OWN CHICKEN STOCK CAN SERVE TWO PURPOSES. THERE'S THE STOCK, WHICH NOT ONLY IS A VERSATILE BASE FOR SOUPS AND SAUCES BUT ALSO MAKES A FLAVORFUL COOKING LIQUID FOR RICE OR FOR BRAISING POULTRY OR VEGETABLES. AND THEN THERE'S THE MEAT FROM THE BONES OF THE BIRD, PREFERABLY A LARGE ORGANIC HEN, THAT CAN BE USED FOR ANY NUMBER OF DISHES. DICE IT AND ADD TO PASTA OR RICE, THEN TOSS WITH DICED FRESH TOMATO AND CHOPPED HERBS TO MAKE A QUICK DINNER. SHRED IT AND MIX WITH MUSTARD, MAYO, SALT, AND PEPPER TO MAKE A SANDWICH FILLING; OR MIX WITH DICED APPLE, CELERY, PECANS, DRIED CRANBERRIES, AND YOGURT TO MAKE A QUICK LUNCH SALAD.

Makes about 4 quarts

- 1 large (4½- to 5-pound) hen, preferably free-range organic**
- 1 large onion, unpeeled, ends trimmed, halved**
- 2 carrots, cut into 2" to 3" chunks**
- 1 rib celery, cut into 2" to 3" chunks**
- 1 large leek, split lengthwise and well washed**
- 2 to 3 cloves garlic**
- 2 sprigs parsley**
- 2 sprigs thyme**
- 1 teaspoon black peppercorns**
- 1½ teaspoons salt**

RINSE the chicken inside and out and place in a heavy-bottomed 12-quart stockpot. (The stock can also be made in a slow cooker—see [“Tips for Making Broth or Stock in a Slow Cooker”](#)—if you wish to leave the stock unattended.)

Add the onion, carrots, celery, leek, garlic, parsley, thyme, peppercorns, and salt. Add enough water to cover completely (about 8 quarts). Bring to a boil, uncovered, then reduce the heat to bring the stock to a slow simmer. Be sure to let the stock simmer slowly in order to produce a clear liquid. Using a slotted spoon, skim off any foam that rises to the surface. Simmer, uncovered, for 6 hours, skimming occasionally. Add water as it evaporates to keep the ingredients covered.

Remove the cooked chicken to a bowl and let cool. Remove the meat from the bones, dice, and refrigerate to use as desired.

Return any liquid that has drained off the chicken to the stockpot. Strain the stock through a sieve lined with a few layers of dampened cheesecloth or a muslin kitchen towel. Cool the stock quickly by setting it in an ice bath. (I set it in a large bowl of snow in the winter!) Refrigerate or freeze the stock in resealable plastic bags.

TWO-FOR-ONE BEEF STOCK

FOR THE MOST RICHLY FLAVORED STOCK, START BY BROWNING THE BEEF BONES IN THE OVEN. AS THE STOCK SIMMERS, THE CHUCK ROAST COOKS AND CAN THEN BE THE BASIS FOR A VARIETY OF MEALS. CHILL AND SLICE THE MEAT FOR HOT BEEF SANDWICHES, OR INTO CHUNKS FOR CASSEROLES, A FRENCH RAGOUT, ROAST BEEF SALAD, OR OTHER FAVORITE QUICK MAIN DISHES.

Makes about 4 quarts

6 pounds beef soup bones or meaty beef ribs
1 large onion, quartered
3 large carrots, cut into 2" pieces
2 ribs celery, including some leaves, chopped
1 parsnip, peeled and chopped
½ cup red wine or water
4 sprigs parsley
2 cloves garlic
8 black peppercorns
1 tablespoon salt
2 teaspoons dried thyme
1 bay leaf
3 pounds beef chuck roast

PREHEAT the oven to 450°F. Cover a rimmed baking sheet with foil and coat the foil with cooking spray.

Spread the beef bones evenly in the prepared pan, and scatter the onion, carrots, celery, and parsnip over the bones. Roast, uncovered and turning once, until the bones are well browned, about 30 minutes.

Drain any accumulated fat off the baking sheet and place the bones and vegetables in an 8- to 10-quart stockpot. (The stock can also be made in a slow cooker—see [“Tips for Making Broth or Stock in a Slow Cooker”](#)—if you wish to leave the stock unattended.) Pour the wine or water into the baking sheet and gently scrape up the browned bits using a silicone spatula or wooden spoon. Pour the liquid and the bits into the stockpot.

Add the parsley, garlic, peppercorns, salt, thyme, bay leaf, and the roast. Add water to cover.

Bring the liquid to a gentle boil. Reduce the heat, cover, and simmer until the stock is intensely flavored, 5 hours. Remove the chuck roast and set aside for another use. Line a colander or sieve with a triple layer of dampened cheesecloth. Pour the stock through to strain out the solids. Cool the stock quickly by setting it in an ice bath. (I set it in a large bowl of snow in the winter.)

Refrigerate or freeze the stock in resealable plastic bags.

COOLING STOCK SAFELY

Homemade stock is always my first choice, and making it requires little more than assembling several ingredients in a big pot filled with water—and waiting. But there are some safety considerations when it comes to cooling the finished stock. Bringing the temperature down quickly is key, since stock offers up an excellent opportunity for bacteria to grow if left out to cool over a long period of time. The facts are these: When the stock’s temperature is between 45° and 145°F, it’s in the “danger zone,” but only if it’s allowed to stay in that zone for a substantial period of time. Bacteria divide every 20 minutes, and if the stock is left, say, on the counter for just 2 hours, it can be unsafe to eat. To cool quickly, place the bowl or pot, uncovered, into an ice-water bath (ideally this is a sink full of ice water), then stir the stock often. Once it’s cooled to lukewarm, the stock can be refrigerated, tightly covered, for up to 5 days or poured into ice cube trays or resealable plastic bags and frozen up to 12 months.

TIPS FOR MAKING BROTH OR STOCK IN A SLOW COOKER

- First of all, you need to have a very large (8- to 10-quart) slow cooker.
 - Don’t fill the pot more than two-thirds full. Liquid in a slow cooker doesn’t evaporate as quickly as in a stockpot, and if the slow cooker is too full, the liquid will splatter all over the place. It is helpful to weight down the lid. Some cookers come with a band that stretches across the top of the lid.
 - After filling the pot, set the cooker on high until the liquid is simmering. That usually will take 2 hours. After that, you can set the cooker to cook on low.
-

HOW TO FREEZE STOCKS AND BROTHS

I prefer to freeze homemade stocks and broths in quart-size heavy-duty, resealable freezer bags, measuring 2 cups into each bag. I stack them up in a high-rimmed cake pan just in case anything leaks out. Other options are rigid plastic containers that can be reused. Leave a little space to allow for expansion. For smaller portions, I pour the stock into ice cube trays. Once frozen, transfer them to resealable plastic bags and use them cube by cube. Frozen stocks and broths will keep up to a year—if you don’t use them sooner!

BASIC VEGETABLE BROTH

A RICH VEGETABLE BROTH IS A GREAT THING TO HAVE ON HAND, ESPECIALLY IF YOU NEED TO COOK FOR A VEGETARIAN OR SOMEBODY WHO SHUNS ANIMAL PRODUCTS. I LIKE THE COLOR THAT COMES FROM THE ONIONS AND POTATOES THAT ARE NOT PEELED. OF COURSE, THEY NEED TO BE SCRUBBED FREE OF ANY GRIME BEFORE ADDING TO THE POT. SOME COOKS SAY THEY MAKE VEGETABLE STOCK OUT OF ANY VEGETABLES THEY HAVE ON HAND. SOME SAVE POTATO PEELINGS FOR BROTH. THIS IS DEFINITELY A RECIPE FOR THE FRUGAL COOK!

Makes about 2 quarts

4 ribs celery, cut into 2" lengths
3 large carrots, cut into 2" lengths
1 large sweet onion, unpeeled, quartered
1 large boiling potato, cut into 1" slices
½ pound fresh mushrooms, coarsely chopped, or ¼ cup dried mushrooms
1 large leek, halved lengthwise, cut into 4" lengths, and well washed
8 large cloves garlic, unpeeled, smashed
1½ teaspoons salt
1½ teaspoons sweet paprika
2 bay leaves
1 teaspoon black peppercorns
4 quarts water

COMBINE the celery, carrots, onion, potato, mushrooms, leek, garlic, salt, paprika, bay leaves, and peppercorns in an 8-quart stockpot and add the water. Bring to a boil. (The broth can also be made in a slow cooker—see [“Tips for Making Broth or Stock in a Slow Cooker”](#)—if you wish to leave the broth unattended.)

Simmer, uncovered, until the liquid is reduced by half, about 1 hour 30 minutes.

Line a colander with a double thickness of cheesecloth or a dampened muslin kitchen towel, and pour the stock through. Press lightly with a spoon or spatula. Discard or compost the vegetables.

A Glossary of Bread-Baking Basics

“Good bread is the most fundamentally satisfying of all foods; and good bread with fresh butter, the greatest of feasts.”

—James Beard

BAKING SODA AND BAKING POWDER

What’s the difference between baking powder and baking soda? It’s a question many beginning bakers ask. The answer is in their makeup. Baking powder is a combination of an acid and an alkaline, and when it is subjected to moisture and heat, it makes bubbles in the dough that cause the dough to rise while baking. Baking soda is simply a base. When there is baking soda in a recipe, there usually is also an acid ingredient like vinegar, buttermilk, lemon, cream of tartar, or fruit. Soda will react with the acid ingredient to create bubbles in the dough that make the bread rise.

EGGS

Eggs add rich flavor and a golden color to bread and produce a finer crumb. They are often an important ingredient in many specialty holiday breads. Yeast breads containing eggs in the dough brown quickly during baking.

FATS

Fats like oil, butter, and shortening add tenderness and flavor to bread. Breads made with fats are also moister. Low-fat products contain water and are not recommended for baking either quick breads or yeast breads.

FLOUR

For yeast breads, unbleached bread flour makes the best loaf because it is higher in protein content than all-purpose flour. When water is added to flour, two proteins (glutenin and gliadin) combine to form gluten. Gluten forms a network of proteins that stretch through the dough like a web, trapping air bubbles that form as the yeast ferments. This creates the characteristic airholes of perfect bread.

All-purpose flour will work in most bread recipes, but you may need to use slightly more flour because there is less gluten in the flour to absorb liquid. Cake flour does not contain enough protein to make yeast bread. Cake flour, however, is often used, especially in the South, to make tender biscuits and other quick breads.

Whole-grain flours add color, texture, and flavor to breads. These flour types don’t have enough gluten to make a successful loaf on their own, so bread flour or pure gluten (called vital gluten) is almost always added to provide structure. Half bread flour and half whole-grain flour is a proportion that usually works well.

HERBS, SPICES, AND SEEDS

Many ethnic and holiday breads depend on herbs, spices, and seeds for their characteristic flavor. They also enhance texture and appearance.

LIQUIDS

The type of liquid you use will change a bread's characteristics. Water will make a loaf that has more wheat flavor and a crisper crust. Milk and cream-based breads produce a richer bread with a finer texture. They also promote quicker browning in breads because of the additional sugar and butterfat added to the dough.

SALT

Salt is essential to almost every bread recipe. It helps control yeast development, and prevents the bread from overproofing. In most breads, salt also adds flavor and brings out the flavors of other ingredients. A standard loaf will require $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt per cup of flour, although some recipes might call for a little less. One exception to this rule is the [Crusty Tuscan Bread](#). It naturally develops a very light and airy texture and has a rather bland flavor. In Tuscany, this bread balances meals that are highly spiced or highly salted.

SUGAR

Sugar is the fuel that feeds yeast and promotes fermentation, producing the carbon dioxide that makes the bread rise. Some bread recipes don't use sugar, but depend on starch in the flour to provide food for the yeast. Excess amounts of sugar will result in overly heavy, dense breads that brown too quickly before the center of the bread is done.

TOPPINGS

Toppings can change the crust of a loaf. Egg glaze (or egg wash) is used to attach other ingredients like nuts or seeds to the top of the loaf. For a chewy, crisp crust, spray the dough with water while it is baking. Brushing the baked loaf with butter will soften the crust.

YEAST

Yeast breads are, of course, leavened breads. The simplest are made with just water, flour, and yeast. My mom, like home bakers in her day, used compressed cake yeast; there was no such thing as dry yeast back then.

Today I use active dry yeast almost exclusively. Not only is compressed cake yeast hard to find but it has a shelf life of just 2 weeks. Active dry yeast, on the other hand, is readily available and will keep for several months stored in a cool dry place or in the freezer.

Active dry yeast comes in $\frac{1}{4}$ -ounce packages. One package measures from $2\frac{1}{4}$ to $2\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoons of yeast, depending on the brand—usually a little less than 1 tablespoon. In this book, therefore, I have specified “1 package ($\frac{1}{4}$ ounce) or 1 scant tablespoon active dry yeast.” (Use the tablespoon measure if you buy yeast in bulk.) If you are not sure if your yeast is active, dissolve it in warm water and add a pinch of sugar. If it bubbles up within 5 minutes, it is good. If not, toss the mixture and start with a fresh packet. If you bake a lot of bread, it is more economical to buy yeast in bulk from a whole food coop or a wholesale store. When dissolving the yeast in liquid before adding to the bread mixture, the liquid should be between 105° and 115°F. If the dry yeast is combined with flour and other dry ingredients first, then the temperature of the liquid added to the bread mixture should be higher: 120° to 130°F. Use a thermometer to check.

There is much discussion around the difference between active dry yeast and instant dry yeast. The truth is, there is very little difference. Some maintain that instant dry yeast is stronger than active dry yeast and that you need to use less of it. Whatever the case, the trick is to watch the dough, especially after it is shaped into a loaf. When it has almost doubled in bulk, it is ready to bake. The rising of yeast dough depends more on the temperature of the environment (your kitchen) than on time or the type of yeast used. If the loaf is overproofed (meaning it has risen and then deflated during the rise), it will likely flatten while baking because the bubbles that formed when the bread was rising could not hold up. When it is slightly underproofed, there tends to be more “oven spring” while baking. “Oven

spring” describes the increase in the volume of a dough during the first 10 to 12 minutes of baking due to increased rate of expansion of gases.

QUICK BREADS

Quick breads are leavened with baking powder or baking soda (like muffins) or steam (like popovers)

BREAD-BAKING TECHNIQUES

Begin by reading the recipe carefully. Make sure you have all of the ingredients assembled. Start with a simple bread loaf recipe, like the Fresh Baguette (recipe follows), especially when learning to make yeast breads.



FRESH BAGUETTE

MY FAVORITE METHOD OF GETTING A CRISP CRUST ON BAGUETTES MIGHT SEEM A BIT OVER THE TOP—AND MORE THAN YOU WANT TO ATTEMPT. I KEEP A PAN OF RIVER ROCKS IN THE BOTTOM OF MY OVEN SO THAT THEY HEAT UP AS THE OVEN ITSELF DOES. I ALSO KEEP A BAKING STONE ON THE CENTER RACK OF THE OVEN. IT TAKES AT LEAST AN HOUR FOR THE OVEN TO HEAT BOTH THE ROCKS AND THE STONE. THEN, I SLIDE THE RISEN LOAVES ONTO THE STONE AND PITCH ABOUT A CUP OF WATER ONTO THE ROCKS, WHICH CREATES THE STEAM NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE A CRUSTY LOAF.

THE FOLLOWING RECIPE OFFERS AN ALTERNATIVE METHOD FOR BAKING A VERY ACCEPTABLE BAGUETTE, NOT QUITE SO CRUSTY, BUT STILL EXCELLENT.

Makes 2

1 package (¼ ounce) or 1 scant tablespoon active dry yeast

1¾ cups warm water (105° to 115°F)

4 cups unbleached bread flour, plus additional if needed

2 teaspoons salt

IN A LARGE BOWL, sprinkle the yeast over the warm water and let stand until the yeast looks foamy, about 5 minutes. With a wooden spoon, stir in 2 cups of the flour until combined. Set aside until the dough begins to rise to make a sponge, 25 minutes. Alternatively, to further develop the flavor, cover and refrigerate the sponge overnight.

In a food processor, combine the remaining 2 cups flour and the salt. Pulse 2 or 3 times until mixed. Alternatively, mix the flour and salt in a large bowl or in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment.

Add the sponge to the flour mixture. In the food processor, process until the dough comes together in a soft ball that completely comes away from the sides of the bowl. Alternatively, add the sponge to the flour mixture in the mixing bowl and mix until a shaggy dough forms. If the dough seems dry, add more water 1 tablespoon at a time. Or, if the dough seems too moist, add more flour, 1 tablespoon at a time. Turn out onto a lightly floured surface, cover with a bowl, and let sit for 15 minutes until the dough comes together. Knead until the dough forms a smooth ball, about 10 minutes.

Place the dough in a lightly greased bowl and turn to coat. Cover with a cloth and let rise in a warm place until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour. (The dough can be refrigerated overnight, if necessary.)

Lightly grease two 17" × 14" baking sheets. Punch the dough down and divide into 2 equal pieces. Shape each piece into a long, slender loaf about 21" long and 3" wide.

Place the loaves diagonally on the baking sheets and let rise, uncovered, about 30 minutes until almost doubled in bulk. (You can refrigerate the loaves at this point to bake several hours later or the next day. Brush or spray with cool water before refrigerating.)

Position an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat to 475°F. Using a razor blade, a French *lame*, or a serrated knife, make 4 or 5 diagonal slashes in the risen loaves and spray with cool water. Bake one loaf at a time (refrigerate the second until ready to bake) until golden and the loaf sounds hollow when tapped, 25 to 30 minutes. Transfer to a rack to cool.

Variation:

CIABATTA LOAVES:

MAKE the Fresh Baguette dough using only 3 cups flour and reducing the salt to 1½ teaspoons. When ready to shape the dough for baking, lightly flour or line the baking sheets with parchment. Divide the dough into 4 pieces, and form each into a 3" × 7" oval. Place 2 loaves on each prepared sheet and dust lightly with flour. Cover and let rise until almost doubled in bulk, about 45 minutes. Position an oven rack in the middle of the oven and preheat to 425°F. Spritz the loaves with water. Bake one sheet at a time, for 25 to 30 minutes, spritzing every 5 to 10 minutes to achieve a crispy crust.

Makes 4



Fresh Baguette

A BASIC VEGETABLE SOUP

THIS IS A GO-TO TEMPLATE THAT CALLS FOR WHATEVER YOU HAPPEN TO HAVE ON HAND TO MAKE THE SOUP. IT IS AN ALL-SEASON SOUP AND VERY FORGIVING, WHICH IS WHY THERE ARE NO MEASURES GIVEN. SERVED WITH A SLICE OF BREAD SUCH AS THE [BASIC HOME-BAKED BREAD](#) TOPPED WITH YOUR FAVORITE CHEESE OR SAVORY SPREAD.

Butter or oil
Onion, chopped
Celery, finely chopped
Carrots, finely chopped
Potatoes, cut into 1" chunks, or cooked beans
Tomatoes, fresh or canned
Any other vegetables you have on hand and like
Boiling water or broth
Salt
Ground black pepper
Fresh or dried herbs

IN A HEAVY POT, heat the butter or oil. Add the onion, celery, and carrots and sauté them over medium low heat until the vegetables become aromatic, 5 to 10 minutes.

Add the potatoes or beans, tomatoes, and other vegetables of your choice. Add boiling water or broth to cover all the vegetables. Simmer until the soup comes together, 30 minutes. Add the seasonings of your choice about halfway through the cooking time.

BASIC HOME-BAKED BREAD

THIS IS THE EASIEST LOAF YOU WILL EVER BAKE. IT IS ALSO THE MOST BASIC, WHICH MAKES IT EASY TO VARY THE RECIPE. SWITCH THE LIQUID FROM WATER TO MILK OR JUICE OR BROTH, AND YOU HAVE A DIFFERENT FLAVORED LOAF. VARY THE SUGAR (OR LEAVE IT OUT), THE SHORTENING (OR LEAVE IT OUT), AND THE MIXTURE OF FLOURS, AND YOU CAN COME UP WITH EVEN MORE FLAVORS. ADD SEEDS, DRIED FRUITS, OR NUTS, AND YOU GET EVEN MORE VARIETY.

THIS RECIPE GOES BACK TO THE BASIC PROPORTION OF APPROXIMATELY 3 PARTS FLOUR TO 1 PART LIQUID PLUS YEAST AND SALT. THE SUGAR ADDS FLAVOR, AND THE BUTTER OR SHORTENING IMPARTS FLAVOR AND TENDERNESS.

YOU DO NOT NEED TO USE UP ALL THE FLOUR CALLED FOR IN THIS RECIPE, OR YOU MAY NEED MORE FLOUR THAN CALLED FOR. THE AMOUNTS VARY DEPENDING ON MANY FACTORS, INCLUDING WEATHER, WHICH IS WHY I ONLY GIVE THE APPROXIMATE AMOUNT NEEDED. IT IS ALWAYS BETTER TO USE LESS, RATHER THAN MORE FLOUR; DOUGH THAT HAS TOO MUCH FLOUR WORKED INTO IT MAY NOT RISE WELL—SO BE A FLOUR MISER.

Makes one 9¼" × 5¼" loaf

- 1 package (¼ ounce) or 1 scant tablespoon active dry yeast**
- 1 cup warm water (105° to 115°F)**
- 1 tablespoon sugar**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- 1 tablespoon soft butter or oil**
- 3 cups (more or less) unbleached bread flour or all-purpose flour**

IN A LARGE BOWL, sprinkle the yeast over the warm water. Add the sugar, salt, and butter or oil. Mix and let stand until the yeast begins to foam, about 5 minutes.

Add the flour, a little at a time, beating well from the beginning to keep the dough smooth.

Turn the dough out onto a floured board and knead, adding small spoonfuls of flour as needed, until the dough is soft and smooth—not sticky—to the touch.

Put the dough in a lightly greased or oiled bowl, turning to coat. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour.

Punch down the dough. Turn out onto a floured board and knead to release the air bubbles.

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Butter a 9¼" x 5¼" loaf pan.

Form the dough into a loaf and set in the pan. Cover and let rise until the loaf is about ½" above the edge of the pan, about 30 minutes. Bake until golden brown and a wooden skewer inserted into the loaf comes out clean, 35 to 45 minutes. Turn out onto a rack to cool.

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