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Sesame Bread

Makes 1, 2, or 4 loaves

I looove the flavor and texture that sesame seeds bring to this loaf. They're a little thirsty, so you've gotta let them soak in some water before adding them to your dough. Covering the outside of your loaf with sesame seeds will have all your friends swooning, for sure, I prefer this as a hearth loaf but it makes a mean sandwich loaf as well, so follow your heart on that one.

Just so ya know, you'll need about 1-1/3 cups/120 g of sesame seeds per loaf, to fill the inside and coat the outside.

TOOLS YOU'LL NEED:

Measuring Cups, Measuring Spoons, Small bowl or jar, Thermometer, Big mixing bowl (at least 6 in/15 cm tall and 12 in/31 cm wide), Mixing spoon, 2 plates, plastic wrap, small towel (at least 6 by 8 in/15 by 20 cm), Spatula or bench knife, Proofing basket and cloth, Baking stone and oven-safe pot or bowl (at least 6 in/15 cm tall and 12 in/31 cm wide) OR a Dutch oven, parchment paper, large plate or pizza peel, Double-edge razor blade and handle, Cooling rack.

1. Gather your foodstuff and tools.

2. Toast the seeds. Preheat the oven to 350°F/180°C. Spread the sesame seeds on a baking sheet and bake for 10 to 15 minutes, until they're golden-brown and smell yummy.

3. Make the seed soaker. Measure and mix in a small bowl or jar:

	1 LOAF	2 LOAVES	4 LOAVES
Toasted Sesame Seeds	1/3 cup/ 55 g	2/3 cup/ 110 g	1-1/3 cups/ 220g
Warm water (100°F/38°C)	1/4 cup/ 60 g	1/2 cup/ 120 g	1 cup/ 240 g

4. Make the pre-ferment. Measure and mix:

	1 LOAF	2 LOAVES	4 LOAVES
Yeast	1/4 tsp	1/2 tsp	1 tsp
Cool Water (60°F/15°C)	1/2 cup/ 120 g	1 cup/ 240 g	2 cups/ 480 g
Whole-wheat Flour	3/4 cup/ 105 g	1-1/2 cups/ 210 g	3 cups/ 420 g

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5. Let it ferment. Cover both bowls with a plate or plastic wrap, and put them in a cool place (55 to 65°F/13 to 18°C) for about 12 hours.

6. Mix the dough. Mix into your pre-ferment:

	1 LOAF	2 LOAVES	4 LOAVES
Lukewarm water (80°F/27°C)	1 cup/ 240 g	2 cups/ 480 g	4 cups/ 960 g
Bread Flour	2-1/2 cups/ 375 g	5 cups/ 750 g	10 cups/ 1500 g
Sea Salt, fine grind	2 tsp/ 12 g	4 tsp/ 24 g	2 Tbsp, plus 2 tsp/ 48 g
Seed Soaker	all of it	all of it	all of it

7. Let the magic happen. Cover the bowl until the dough is doubled in size. (Remember: Rise at room temperature for 3 hours, then in the fridge for at least 3 hours or up to 4 days.

8. Shape your loaf. Flour your counter and pour the dough out. Gently fold a corner up and over into the middle, and repeat around the entire piece of dough. Flip your loaf so that it's seam-side down.

9. Cover your loaf in seeds. Wet a small towel, gently wring it out, and spread it out on a plate. Spread 1 cup/165 g of the sesame seeds on the second plate. Gently lift your loaf and roll it in the wet towel to dampen. Carefully roll your wet loaf in the seeds, getting it completely covered.

10. Let your loaf rise. Don't flour the proofing cloth! The seeds will stop the loaf from sticking. Plop your loaf into the cloth-lined basket, seam-side up. Let it rise until it's about 150 percent of its original volume – 2 to 4 hours at room temperature, or up to 2 days in the fridge.

11. Preheat your oven. Once your loaf has risen, put your baking stone or Dutch oven on the middle rack of your oven and preheat at 475°F/240°C for 45 minutes.

12. Bake your bread. Sprinkle the loaf with cornmeal (or cover with parchment paper) and invert the proofing basket onto the large plate or pizza peel. (Or, carefully plop the loaf into your preheated Dutch oven, omitting the parchment.) Slash the top with the razor, get it into the oven, and cover it with a pot or bowl (or put the lid on the Dutch oven). Bake for 20 minutes, uncover, and remove the parchment. Bake for another 15 minutes, and check the bread to see how it's looking. If it's not dark brown, give it another 5 to 10 minutes.

13. Then let it cool. Take it out of the oven and place it on a cooling rack, or lean it on its side so the air can move freely around it.