



Topknot Master Loaf with Grains

This loaf is so much fun to make! You may need to take a deep breath and feel quite brave to handle the dough as you need to create the topknot, but it is so fulfilling and produces an impressive-looking loaf. I love adding grains to doughs; the dough always rises well and the baked loaf has the added beauty of the chew and flavor that the grains bring.

50 g (¼ cup) active starter

350 g (1½ cups) water

500 g (4 cups) strong white bread flour

150 g (1 cup) cooked and cooled einkorn, or any cooked and cooled grain of your choice.

7 g (1 tsp) salt, or to taste

Rice flour, for dusting

PREP: Feed your starter to generate the 50 grams (¼ cup) of active starter needed for the recipe. Prepare a round banneton, 8¾ inches (22 cm) in diameter and 3¼ inches (8.5 cm) deep, or a lined bowl, with rice flour, and set aside a large baking pan with a lid, plus parchment paper.

Makes 1 standard loaf

Step 1: In the early evening, in a large mixing bowl, roughly mix together all the ingredients, except the rice flour, until you have a shaggy, rough dough. Cover the bowl with a clean shower cap or your choice of cover and leave the bowl on the counter for 1 hour.

Step 2: After an hour or so, perform the first set of pulls and folds until the dough feels less sticky and comes together into a soft ball. You will feel the grain in the dough working its way evenly through the mixture. Cover the bowl again and leave it on your counter.

Step 3: Over the next few hours, do three more sets of pulls and folds on the dough, covering the dough after each set. Perform the final set before going to bed.

Step 4: Leave the covered bowl on the counter overnight, typically 8 to 10 hours, at 64 to 68°F (18 to 20°C).

Step 5: In the morning, the dough will have grown to double, almost triple in size. The dough loved the added grain, and you'll see that in the growth.

Gently but firmly perform a final set of pulls and folds on the dough to pull it into a ball. The dough will be bouncy and full of satisfying resistance.

Place the dough, smooth side down, in the banneton, adding extra rice flour down the sides and across the surface, cover with the same shower cap and place in the fridge for at least 3 hours, up to a maximum of 24 hours.

Step 6: When you are ready to bake, decide whether you would like to bake in a preheated oven or from a cold start. If preheating, set the oven to 425°F (220°C) convection or 450°F (230°C) conventional.

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Topknot Master Loaf with Grains (Continued)

Remove the cover from the banneton, then place the paper over the top of the banneton and the pan upside down over the top of them both. With one hand under the banneton and one on the pan, turn it all over together to turn the dough out of the banneton and into the pan.

With one hand, lift a handful of dough from the middle of the dome of dough, pull it up and twist it into a knot.

If you preheated the oven, put the lid on the pan and bake for 50 minutes. If using a cold start, place the covered pan of dough in the oven, set the temperature as above and set a timer for 55 minutes.

After the baking time for either option, remove the covered pan from the oven. Open the lid to check the loaf. Baking in a lidded pan produces a golden loaf. When you take the lid off, if you feel that your loaf is looking pale, place it back in the hot oven, in its pan, minus the lid, for 5 to 10 minutes to brown the loaf to the color of your choice.

Step 7: Once baked, carefully remove the loaf from the pan, saving the parchment paper for next time, and allow the baked loaf to cool on a wire rack for at least an hour before slicing.

Top Tip:

There is no need to score this loaf unless you would like to; allow it to bake and crack naturally if it chooses to.

Topknot Master Loaf with Grains (Continued)



Start forming the topknot after turning the dough from the banneton into the pan.



From the middle of your dough, pull enough dough to make a full knot. It should be about a handful.



Twist your handful of dough into a knot.



Now you are ready to put it in the oven!