No-Knead Sandwich Bread
Makes 1 9-by-5-inch loaf or 4 10-inch pizzas

An aspiring ten-year old baker could make this loaf, and so can you. Mix the dough in a bowl with a spoon (you can double or triple the recipe if you like), and let it rise in the refrigerator overnight. The refrigerated dough can be used after 8 hours, or for up to 3 days. That means you can bake a loaf every morning and have sandwich bread by lunchtime. But wait, there's more! The dough is great for pizza, too. Let each family member flatten their piece of dough and add their own toppings. Bake pizzas on a baking sheet at 450 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes, or until browned and crispy.

4 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 teaspoons instant (“rapid rise”) yeast
2 teaspoons salt
1 2/3 cups water
1 egg beaten with 2 tablespoons water (optional, for glaze)

1. In a large bowl, whisk the flour, yeast, and salt until combined. Add the water and stir together until combined. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate the dough overnight.

2. Remove the dough from the refrigerator and let rest for about 2 hours to come to room temperature.

3. Spray a 9 by 5-inch loaf pan with vegetable oil spray or brush it with oil.

4. On a generously floured work surface turn out the dough. Sprinkle it lightly with flour and pat the dough into an 8 by 12-inch rectangle. Position the short side of the rectangle so that it is parallel to the edge of the counter. Fold the dough into thirds as you would fold a business letter: bring the bottom third up and fold the top third down to meet it. Rotate the envelope of dough one quarter turn. Stretch it into a rectangle again and fold it as before. Rotate the envelope so the seam is on top and pinch it firmly together to secure the dough into a log. Flip it over so that the seam is on the bottom. If necessary, roll the dough back and forth, moving from the center outward, until you have a log that is the same length as your bread pan.

5. Place the dough in the pan with the seam side down. Cover loosely with an oiled piece of plastic wrap and let rise for 1 to 1 1/2 hours, longer if the room is cool. The center of the loaf should dome about one inch above the rim of the pan.

6. About 20 minutes before the loaf is ready to be baked, position a rack in the lower third of the oven and set the oven to 400 degrees. When the dough has risen, make three shallow, diagonal slashes across the top of the loaf with a serrated knife. Bake the loaf for 10 minutes and decrease the oven temperature to 375 degrees. Bake for an additional 25 to 30 minutes, or until the crust browns. (Total baking time is 35 to 40 minutes.)
7. Tip the loaf out of the pan and tap the bottom of the loaf. It should make a hollow sound and the bottom of the loaf should have browned. If it still seems squishy, put it back in the oven, directly on the oven rack without the pan, and bake for another 5 minutes or so. If you are still wondering whether or not it’s done, insert an instant read thermometer into the bottom of the loaf—the bread is done when it registers 190°F.

8. Set the loaf on a rack to cool completely. Do not cut into the bread until it is thoroughly cool; it continues to bake and set as it cools. Once it is completely cool, store it in a plastic bag or wrap it in a clean tea towel.

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