

INDIGO *House*

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As some of you may know I've been baking my family's bread for toast and sandwiches for 40+ years. I just love homemade bread. Especially the cook's prerogative of that first still warm crust end slathered with butter!! When I was cooking six loaves at a time in the oven of my hundred-year-old Home Comfort wood cook stove I felt particularly Little House on the Prairie.

Over the years I have used many a recipe from many a cookbook. Back in the late 60s and early 70s my shelves contained *The Tassajara Bread Book* by Edward Espe Brown, Carla Emery's *Old Fashioned Recipe Book: An Encyclopedia of Country Living*, there was *Living on the Earth* by Alicia Bay Laurel, and *The Joy of Cooking* (in our family, as in many another, we always just called it Irma). I was learning to juggle the whole wheat flour/white unbleached flour balance so the bread had a tender texture but was rich tasting with milk, eggs, and other additions.

On the farm in South Dakota I was offered bread recipes from my sisters-in-law and other farm wives. So at one time or another I've baked Sprouted Wheat Bread, Fermented Rye, Oatmeal Honey, bagels, crackers, refrigerator rolls, pita, focaccia, and naan. One of my fairly recent 'discoveries' is the most fabulous Carolina Rice Bread from the wonderful book of southern cookery, *Hoppin' John's Low Country Cooking* by John Martin Taylor. I make it 6-8 loaves at a time to share and to freeze. Heavenly toast – and I truly love good toast. In my book toast is one of the major food groups.

Today I'm sharing my work-a-day sandwich loaf; ready in 3-4 hours, and perfect for a family.

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Leni's Basic Sandwich Bread

<u>1 loaf</u>	<u>X3</u>	<u>X4-6 (depending on the pans)</u>
3 C flour	6 C	12 C
1 ¼ tsp salt	2 ½ tsp	5 tsp
1 TBLS dry yeast	1 TBLS	2 TBLS
2 TBLS sugar (or honey)	4 TBLS	½ C
½ C warm milk	1 C	2 C
½ C to 2/3 C warm water	1 C- 1 1/3 C	2 2/3 C
4 TBLS oil (or melted butter)	½ C	1 C

Combine flour, salt, yeast, sugar. Add warm (110 degree) milk (and egg, if you are using), warm (110 degree) water, and oil or butter. Mix together well and empty onto floured surface and knead for 8 min by hand. If using a mixer use the dough hook and then knead another 5 min by hand to finish. Place in lightly greased bowl to rise till nearly doubled. Form the loaves, 9x5 oiled loaf pans are best, let rise for 35-40 min till ½ inch or so above the edge of the bread pan; meanwhile, heat oven to 350 degrees. Just before you put the loaves in the oven gently brush tops with egg yolk/milk mixture; decorate with poppy seed or sesame seed; and slash top with sharp knife.

Bake till brown and 190 degrees on an instant read thermometer if you only use water - -204 degrees if you use butter, milk, or eggs. Bake about 35 min; turn out of the pans and cool 10 minutes before slicing. Can be wrapped when cool and frozen for two months.

Variations: 1-3 eggs combined with the milk to equal amount of milk required

Use up to ½ whole wheat flour – make sure you really knead it thoroughly