

LESSON 1: INTRO TO WORKING WITH YEAST

WHAT IS YEAST?

Yeast is a fungus! Yep, you heard that correctly. Yeast is a living organism and it is a fungus. Yeast lives all around us. It is floating through the air, living on our skin and in our bodies, and it is in food that we eat.

The type of yeast that we will be using in this course is dried yeast. This is a form of commercially produced yeast where the yeast cells have been completely dried, putting them into a dormant state.

There are two main forms of dry yeast: **active dry yeast** and **quick-rise yeast** (also known as rapid rise yeast or instant yeast). Active dry yeast is the original form of dried yeast and contains bigger yeast cells than quick-rise yeasts. Quick-rise yeast contains smaller yeast cells that work a faster than active dry yeast. Bread dough made with quick-rise yeast will rise 30-50% faster than bread made with active dry yeast.

TIP: Active dry and rapid-rise yeast can be substituted for each other in recipes. The only time you would not want to use a rapid-rise yeast is if your recipe calls for your shaped dough to rise for a long period of time in the refrigerator. This is because your dough might over-proof.

HOW YEAST THRIVES

Yeast needs two things to thrive: moisture and a food source. Yeast feeds on sugars and starches in your bread dough.

Yeast is also sensitive to temperatures. Yeast slows down with cold temperatures, yeast speeds up with warm temperatures, and yeast will die at hot temperatures. Yeast begins to die around 125 F (52 C).

TIP: Error on the side of using cooler liquids if you are worried about killing your yeast.

HOW TO MAKE SURE YOUR YEAST IS ALIVE

If you are worried about killing your yeast, you can proof it before adding it to your recipe.

To proof your yeast, add it to the liquid your recipe calls for along with a pinch of sugar. Let the mixture sit for about 5 minutes and look for bubbles forming in the mixture. If you do not see any activity then toss the mixture and start over.

HOMEWORK FOR THIS LESSON

- Try proofing yeast if you have never done it before! Do you see the activity? Share in the comments! (You can do this in conjunction with the homework for the no-knead hearth bread! Proof the yeast and then use it in your bread recipe!)
- Make sure you have everything you need to get started baking bread! Here is a comprehensive list of everything needed for the course:

Equipment

- Mixing Bowls
- Baking Sheets
- Mixing spoons &/or Rubber Spatula
- Dry & Liquid Measuring Cups (if you have a kitchen scale you will not need these)
- Parchment Paper
- Plastic Wrap
- Sharp Knife
- Pastry Brush
- Rolling Pin
- Kitchen Scissors
- Loaf Pan, 8 1/2 " x 4 1/2" (22 cm x 12 cm)
- Kitchen Scale (optional, but highly recommended)
- Bowl Scraper (optional, but is very handy)
- Bench Knife (optional, but is also very handy)
- Bread Lame (optional- this is used for scoring your dough but a sharp knife can be used instead)
- Baking Stone or Baking Steel (optional, you can use baking sheets instead)

Ingredients

- All-Purpose Flour
- Bread Flour (optional, all breads can be made with all-purpose flour but I will suggest bread flour for a few of the recipes for best results)

- Whole Wheat Flour
- Active Dry Yeast or Quick-Rise Yeast
- Kosher Salt (I prefer Morton's kosher salt for bread baking)
- Olive Oil
- Granulated Sugar
- Unsalted Butter
- Eggs