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paul hollywood white bread recipe

Published: September 3, 2026 | Index ID: #-

Paul Hollywood White Bread Recipe: A Step by Step Guide to Baking the Perfect Loaf

When you think of Paul /Hollywood, the first image that comes to mind is a master baker from the UK, celebrated for his expertise on the television show *Great British Bake Off*. His breads are renowned for their crusty exteriors, airy crumb, and unmistakable flavor. In this article we'll walk you through a white bread recipe inspired by Paul Hollywood's techniques. Whether you're a seasoned baker or a novice looking to impress friends and family, this guide will give you the tools you need to create a loaf that rivals the best in a bakery.

Why Paul Hollywood's White Bread Stands Out

Paul Hollywood's bread recipes are built on a few core principles that set them apart from generic store bought loaves:

- High quality ingredients: He insists on using unbleached flour, natural yeast, and pure water.
- Proper dough development: The dough is kneaded until it's elastic and smooth, ensuring gluten formation.
- Controlled fermentation: Slow, low temperature proofing develops flavor and structure.
- Precision baking: He uses a steam oven or adds steam manually to achieve a crisp crust.

By incorporating these principles into our recipe, you'll end up with a loaf that has a beautiful golden crust, a tender crumb, and a subtle, sweet aroma.

Ingredients Overview

Below is the full list of ingredients for a 750 gram loaf of white bread. All measurements are in metric units, which is the standard for most Paul Hollywood recipes.

- 650 /g unbleached all purpose flour (or bread flour for a chewier texture)
- 5 /g salt
- 5 /g instant dry yeast (or 15 /g fresh yeast)
- 400 /ml lukewarm water (about 38 /°C)
- 30 /g unsalted butter, melted (optional for a richer loaf)
- 1 /tsp sugar or honey (optional, to feed the yeast)

Feel free to adjust the butter and sugar levels to suit your taste. If you prefer a lean dough, simply omit the butter and sugar.

Equipment You'll Need

While the recipe is straightforward, having the right tools will make the process smoother:

- Digital kitchen scale (for precise measurements)
- Large mixing bowl or stand mixer with dough hook
- Kitchen timer
- Loaf pan (23 /cm x 13 /cm) or a baking sheet if you prefer a round loaf

- Silicone baking mat or parchment paper
- Sharp knife or bread lame for scoring
- Spray bottle for steam or a small pan of water for creating steam in the oven
- Oven thermometer (optional but helpful)

Step 1: Mixing the Dough

1.1. Combine Dry Ingredients

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, salt, and instant yeast. If you're using fresh yeast, crumble it into the flour. This step ensures even distribution of yeast and prevents clumping.

1.2. Add Liquids

Make a well in the center of the dry mixture and pour in the lukewarm water. Add the melted butter and sugar if you're using them. Stir with a wooden spoon or dough hook until a shaggy dough forms.

1.3. First Rise (Autolyse)

Cover the bowl with a damp cloth or plastic wrap and let the dough rest for 20 30 minutes. This autolyse period hydrates the flour, making it easier to develop gluten in the next step.

Step 2: Kneading and Gluten Development

2.1. Hand Kneading

If you prefer a traditional method, turn the dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead for about 10 minutes. Look for a dough that is smooth, elastic, and slightly tacky. You should be able to stretch a small piece of dough into a thin sheet without it tearing.

2.2. Stand Mixer

Alternatively, use a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook. Mix on low speed for 5 minutes, then increase to medium and knead for another 5 minutes. The dough should become glossy and spring back when pressed.

Step 3: Bulk Fermentation

Place the dough in a lightly oiled bowl and cover it. Let it rise at room temperature (around 21 /°C or 70 /°F) until it has doubled in size. This usually takes 1 1.5 /hours depending on your environment.

During the first 30 minutes, perform a series of **stretch and folds** every 15 minutes. Grab the edge of the dough, stretch it up, and fold it over onto itself. This technique helps develop gluten without excessive kneading.

Step 4: Shaping the Loaf

4.1. Deflate and Shape

Gently deflate the dough on a lightly floured surface. Shape it into a tight round or oval loaf. The goal is to create a smooth surface and a uniform shape that will rise evenly.

4.2. Proofing

Place the shaped dough seam side up in a well floured proofing basket (banneton) or a greased loaf pan. Cover with a kitchen towel and let it proof for 45 60 minutes, or until it has risen by about 50 /%.

Step 5: Scoring and Baking

5.1. Preheat the Oven

Preheat your oven to 230 °C (450 °F). Place a small pan of water on the bottom rack or use a spray bottle to create steam. Steam is essential for a crisp, golden crust.

5.2. Score the Dough

Just before baking, use a sharp knife or bread lame to score the top of the loaf. Scoring allows the bread to expand evenly and creates a decorative pattern.

5.3. Bake

Slide the loaf into the oven and bake for 25 30 minutes, or until the crust is deep golden brown and the internal temperature reaches 95 /°C (203 /°F). If you're baking a round loaf, you may need to adjust the time slightly.

Step 6: Cooling and Serving

Remove the bread from the oven and let it cool on a wire rack for at least 30 minutes before slicing. This step allows the crumb to set and prevents the loaf from becoming gummy.

Serve warm with butter, jam, or your favorite spread. The bread's mild sweetness pairs wonderfully with savory dishes like grilled cheese, roasted chicken, or a hearty soup.

Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

- Too much flour: Over flouring can make the dough dry and dense. Use a scale and be precise.
- Inadequate proofing: Under proofed dough will not rise properly, leading to a tight crumb.
- No steam: Without steam, the crust will be dull and chewy. Remember to add water or use a steam oven.
- High oven temperature: Baking too hot can burn the crust before the interior is fully baked.

Variations to Try

If you want to experiment, consider the following tweaks that still honor Paul Hollywood's style:

- Whole wheat blend: Replace 25 /% of the all purpose flour with whole wheat flour for added nutrition.
- Herb infusion: Add dried rosemary or thyme to the dough for a fragrant loaf.
- Cheese crust: Brush the loaf with melted butter and sprinkle grated parmesan before baking.
- Sweet version: Increase the sugar to 15 /g and add raisins or dried cranberries for a dessert bread.

Storage Tips

To keep your bread fresh, store it in a paper bag at room temperature. Avoid plastic bags, which can trap moisture and lead to mold. For longer storage, slice the bread and freeze the slices in a resealable bag. Reheat in a toaster or oven for a crisp finish.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can I use bread flour instead of all purpose flour?

A: Yes. Bread flour has a higher protein content, which results in a chewier crumb and a more robust crust.

Q: What if I don't have a banneton?

A: A greased loaf pan works fine. Just make sure the dough is shaped tightly and the pan is well floured.

Q: How long does the loaf stay fresh?

A: It typically stays fresh for 2–3 days when stored properly. For longer shelf life, freeze the slices.

Conclusion

Paul Hollywood’s white bread recipe is a testament to the artistry and science of baking. By following the steps outlined above—using quality ingredients, allowing proper fermentation, and baking with steam—you’ll craft a loaf that’s both visually stunning and deliciously satisfying. Whether you’re preparing a simple sandwich or hosting a dinner party, this bread will elevate any meal. Happy baking, and enjoy the aroma of freshly baked white bread that fills your kitchen with warmth and comfort.

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