Bread & baking

Danish Rye Bread

A dense, dark loaf with a moist, tight crumb and a crackling crust — sourdough-fermented rye studded with seeds, sliced thin for open-face smørrebrød, tasting of grain and fermentation and something ancient.

Time 1800 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 100 parts Dark rye flour (whole grain)
- ☐ 90 parts Water (room temperature)
- ☐ 20 parts Whole sunflower seeds
- ☐ 15 parts Cracked rye kernels (rye chops)
- ☐ 30 parts Rye sourdough starter (100% hydration)
- ☐ 2 parts Fine sea salt
- ☐ 10 parts Whole flaxseeds
- ☐ 3 parts Dark malt syrup or molasses

Let's make it.

01 Combine the cracked rye kernels and flaxseeds in a bowl. Pour enough boiling water over them to submerge by 1 cm. Stir and cover. Soak for a minimum of 8 hours (or overnight) at room temperature. The flaxseeds will absorb all their water and release mucilage, forming a gel. The cracked rye will soften completely. This soaker is essential: dry rye chops added directly to the dough will steal water during fermentation and make the bread dry and crumbly.

02 Combine the rye sourdough starter, water, salt, and malt syrup in a large bowl and stir to dissolve. Add all the dark rye flour, sunflower seeds, and the entire soaker (seed gel and all). Stir vigorously with a sturdy spoon or dough whisk for 3-4 minutes until completely homogeneous. Rye dough is not a wheat dough — it will never be smooth or elastic. It will be thick and sticky, like wet cement, and should be mixed only until uniform. Gluten development is irrelevant in rye; what matters is thorough hydration and even distribution of seeds.

03 Grease a 900g loaf tin (approximately 22 x 11 x 7 cm) generously with oil. Wet your hands and spatula to prevent sticking. Transfer the dough into the tin, pressing it firmly into the corners with wet fingers or a wet spatula. Smooth the top with a wet spatula — the surface should be flat and even. Scatter a few sunflower seeds on top if desired. Cover with oiled plastic wrap and proof at room temperature (20-22 C) for 8-12 hours, until the dough has risen to the tin rim and the surface shows small cracks and bubble pores.

04 Preheat the oven to 230 C (450 F). Place the loaf in the oven and immediately reduce to 200 C (390 F). Bake for 60-70 minutes total. For the last 10 minutes, remove the loaf from the tin and bake directly on the oven rack for maximum crust development. A probe thermometer inserted into the center should read 95-98 C (203-208 F) when done. THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP: do not cut the bread for at least 12-24 hours after baking. The crumb must set completely — cutting hot rye bread produces a gummy, underdone-tasting interior. Wrap in a clean cloth and wait.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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