Bread & baking

Scandinavian Rye Bread

A dense, dark, tangy loaf of rye flour, whole grains, and seeds, long-fermented with a sourdough rye starter into a moist, sliceable crumb that keeps for weeks.

Time 1200 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 70 % Dark rye flour (whole grain)
- ☐ 30 % Bread flour
- ☐ 80 % Water (cold or room temperature)
- ☐ 25 % Rye sourdough starter (100% hydration)
- ☐ 2 % Fine sea salt
- ☐ 30 % Cracked rye or rye berries (soaked 12 hr)
- ☐ 10 % Sunflower seeds
- ☐ 2 % Caraway seeds
- ☐ 3 % Dark molasses or malt syrup

Let's make it.

01 Cover the cracked rye berries or whole rye berries with cold water and leave to soak for 12 hours or overnight. They will absorb a significant amount of water and soften considerably. Drain before using. This soaker adds texture, moisture, and a nutty chew to the finished loaf — unsoaked grains would be unpleasantly hard and would steal hydration from the dough itself during baking.

02 Combine all the flours, the rye starter, remaining water (adjust for grain moisture), salt, and molasses in a large bowl. Mix vigorously with a wooden spoon or dough scraper — rye dough contains almost no gluten and behaves more like thick batter than bread dough. No kneading is needed or useful: rye proteins do not form gluten strands. Fold in the drained soaker, sunflower seeds, and caraway seeds until evenly distributed. The dough will be very sticky and stiff-heavy — it should hold its shape when scooped but not stretch. Cover and ferment at room temperature 8–12 hours.

03 Transfer the dough to a well-oiled 9 × 5-inch loaf tin. Dip your hands or a spatula in water and smooth the top into an even dome — rye dough cannot be shaped in the traditional sense; the tin does all the work. Sprinkle a few extra sunflower seeds or caraway on the surface. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and proof at room temperature until the dome crowns about 1 cm above the tin rim and cracks appear in the surface, 2–4 hours. Rye dough will not achieve the dramatic rise of wheat bread — a 20–30% increase is ideal. Preheat the oven to 425°F / 220°C.

04 Bake at 425°F / 220°C for 15 minutes, then reduce to 375°F / 190°C and bake a further 45–55 minutes. The internal temperature should reach 205°F / 96°C. The loaf will shrink slightly from the tin sides when done. Turn out and cool completely on a wire rack — at least 8 hours, preferably 24 hours — before slicing. The crumb is gummy and unset when hot; slicing too soon produces a sticky, undercooked interior regardless of the actual bake level. The loaf's interior continues to set as it cools.

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