

DARK PUMPERNICKEL

[THREE LOAVES]

Cornmeal, mashed potato, and rye and whole wheat flours are the body of this fine-tasting pumpernickel loaf. Moist as pumpernickel should be, it is more open-textured than others because of its leavening with two packages of active dry yeast. While no white flour is used in the recipe, I liberally sprinkle it on while kneading the dough and forming the loaves. The dough is less sticky when worked with white flour, and it adds only a tiny portion of white to the overall volume of the dark grains.

INGREDIENTS 1½ cups cold water
¾ cup cornmeal, white or yellow
1½ cups boiling water
1 tablespoon salt
2 tablespoons each sugar and shortening
1 tablespoon caraway seeds
2 packages dry yeast
2 cups potato, mashed
4 cups rye flour
4 cups whole wheat flour, approximately

BAKING PANS Three medium (8½ x 4½) loaf pans, greased or Teflon. If glass, reduce oven heat 25°.

PREPARATION
30 mins. In a saucepan, stir cold water into the cornmeal, add the boiling water, and cook. Stir constantly, until thick and smooth. Add salt, sugar, shortening, and caraway seeds. Let stand until the mixture is warm (105°–115°) to the touch.

Sprinkle yeast into the warm mixture, and blend it in. Add the mashed potato (or ½ cup instant potato and 1½ cups warm water). Stir in rye flour and follow with 1½ cups of the whole wheat flour.

This will be a heavy, dense dough to work with the spoon and hands. Add sufficient whole wheat flour to form a ball. It will be sticky at the beginning. Let it stand 5 minutes until the flours have fully absorbed the moisture.

KNEADING
10 mins. Turn out on a work surface—counter top or bread board—that is liberally floured with white flour (see opening paragraph). It will be helpful to use a spatula or wide putty knife to turn the dough and, at the same time, to keep the work surface scraped clean. The dough will become somewhat elastic and smooth. It will never achieve the elasticity of white dough. Knead. (It will be too heavy to work with a dough hook.)

FIRST RISING
1 hour Place the dough in a bowl and pat with buttered or greased fingers to keep the surface from crusting. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and move to a warm place (80°–85°) until the dough has risen to about twice its original size (as judged by how it creeps up the bowl).

SHAPING
15 mins. Punch down dough and knead for 30 seconds to press out the bubbles. Divide the dough into three pieces

with a sharp knife. Shape into balls. Let them rest under a towel for 3 minutes. Form a loaf by pressing a ball of dough under the palms or with a rolling pin into a flat oval, roughly the length of the baking pan. Fold the oval in half, pinch the seam tightly to seal, tuck under the ends, and place in the pan, seam down. Repeat with the other two loaves.

SECOND RISING
45 mins.

Place the pans in the warm place, cover with wax paper and leave until the center of the dough has risen to the level of the edge of the pan.

BAKING
375°
1 hour

Preheat oven to 375°. Bake the loaves in the oven. When tapping the bottom crust yields a hard and hollow sound, they are done. If not, return to the oven for an additional 10 minutes. Test again. If you wish a darker over-all crust, remove the loaves from the pans during the final 10 minutes of the bake period. Midway in the baking, and again near the end, shift the loaves so they are exposed equally to temperature variations in the oven.

FINAL STEP

Remove bread from the oven, turn from pans and cool the loaves on a metal rack. This loaf will keep for two weeks or longer and for several months in the freezer. Slice thinly.