

Italian Walnut-Raisin Whole Wheat Bread

Recipe from The Bread Bible

Makes 3 round loaves

2 ½ cups warm water (110-115)

2 pkgs active dry yeast

Pinch of light brown sugar or 1 teaspoon honey

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

¼ cup honey

1 tbsp. salt

4 cups fine-grind whole-wheat flour, preferably stone ground

1 ½ to 1 ¾ cups unbleached all-purpose flour

2 cups dark raisins, plumped in hot water 1 hour and drained on paper towels

3 cups broken or chopped walnuts

2 tbsp. whole-wheat flour, for sprinkling

2 tbsp. unprocessed wheat bran, for sprinkling

- In a small bowl pour in ½ cup of the warm water. Sprinkle the yeast and sugar over the surface of the water. Stir to dissolve and let stand at room temperature until foamy, about 10 minutes.
- In a large mixing bowl with a whisk or the work bowl of a heavy-duty electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine the remaining 2 cups warm water, the olive oil, honey, salt, and 2 cups of the whole wheat flour. Add the yeast mixture. Beat vigorously until smooth, about 1 minute. Add the remaining whole wheat flour, ½ cup at a time. Add the unbleached flour, ¼ cup at a time, until a soft dough that just clears the sides of the bowl is formed. Switch to a wooden spoon when necessary if making by hand.

- Turn the dough out onto a very lightly floured work surface and knead until soft and springy yet resilient to the touch, dusting with flour only 1 tablespoon at a time as needed to prevent sticking, about 6 minutes.
If kneading by machine, switch from the paddle to the dough hook and knead for 5 to 6 minutes, or until the dough is smooth and springy and springs back when pressed. If desired, transfer the dough to a floured surface and knead briefly by hand. The dough should retain a smooth, soft quality, with some tackiness under the surface, yet still hold its shape. Do not add too much flour, or the loaf will be too dry and hard to work.
- Place the dough in a greased deep container. Turn once to coat the top and cover with plastic wrap. Let rise at room temperature until doubled in bulk, 2 to 2 ½ hours.
- Grease or parchment-line a baking sheet. In a small bowl, combine the whole wheat flour and wheat bran and sprinkle on the baking sheet. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface without punching it down. Pat it into a large oval and sprinkle evenly with half of the drained raisins and half the walnuts. Press the nuts and fruit into the dough and roll it up. Pat the dough into an oval once again and sprinkle it evenly with the remaining raisins and walnuts. Press the addition in and roll the dough up again. Divide the dough into 3 equal portions. Shape the portions into 3 tight round loaves. Gently pull the surface taut from the bottom on all the loaves. Place the loaves on the prepared pans. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and let rise room temperature until doubled in bulk, 45 minutes to 1 hour
- Twenty minutes before baking, preheat the oven at 400 , with a baking stone, if desired. Using a serrated knife, slash the round loaves quickly with 2 parallel lines and one intersecting line no more than 1/4 " deep. Place the baking sheet directly on the stone or on an oven rack and bake until the loaves are brown, crusty, and sound hollow when tapped with your finger, 35-40 minutes. Transfer the loaves immediately to a cooling rack. Cool completely before slicing.

(The Bread Bible, Beth Hensberger, Chronicle Books, 1999)