

Place the dough on a lightly floured work surface. Roll or pat the dough out into a round about ½ inch thick. With a 2-inch biscuit cutter or the rim of a glass, cut out as many rounds as possible. Gather up the scraps, work into a cohesive ball, reroll and cut out more rounds. Do not reroll the dough more than once or you will end up with tough biscuits.

Transfer the biscuits to the prepared baking sheet and bake until golden brown, about 15 minutes. Serve immediately with flavored butters or spreads. Makes about 9 biscuits.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Collection Series, *Breakfast*, by Brigit L. Binns (Simon & Schuster, 2003).

Sage Bread Sticks

Thin, crunchy bread sticks are perfect to serve with appetizers; try wrapping them with thin slices of prosciutto and place them on an antipasto platter. Or serve them as part of the breadbasket for the holiday feast. When flavored with sage, they become a lovely accompaniment to turkey and dressing.

In a small bowl, sprinkle the yeast over the warm water and let stand until creamy, about 5 minutes. Stir until dissolved.

In a large bowl, using a wooden spoon, stir together 3½ cups of the flour, the salt and sage. Add the yeast mixture and the olive oil. Stir until a soft dough that holds its shape forms, about 2 minutes. Turn out onto a lightly floured work surface and knead until smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes. If the dough feels sticky, knead in flour as needed.

Oil a large bowl, place the dough in it and turn it once to coat the top. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let the dough rise in a warm, draft-free place until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour.

Preheat an oven to 400°F.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface. Punch down the dough, then cut into 4 equal quarters. Working with one quarter at a time, cut the dough into 18 pieces. Keep the remaining quarters covered with plastic wrap. Using your palms, and working with one piece at a time, roll out the dough to form a rope 10 inches long. Place the ropes 1 inch apart on ungreased baking sheets.

Bake until the bread sticks are crisp and browned, about 10 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool completely. Repeat with the remaining dough quarters. Store the bread sticks in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 weeks. Makes 6 dozen.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Savoring Series, *Savoring Italy*, by Michele Scicolone (Time-Life Books, 1999).

Ingredients for Flavored Butters
8 Tbs. (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature, for each flavored butter

For the pecan butter:

½ cup ground pecans

For the lime butter:

1½ Tbs. grated lime zest

1½ Tbs. fresh lime juice

For the chili butter:

2 Tbs. chili powder

2 tsp. cumin seeds

For the Italian herb butter:

3 tsp. minced fresh basil

2 tsp. minced fresh oregano

For the orange butter:

1 tsp. confectioners' sugar

2 Tbs. orange marmalade

Zest of 1 orange

For the strawberry butter:

1 tsp. confectioners' sugar

2 Tbs. strawberry jam

For the mixed berry butter:

1 tsp. confectioners' sugar

2 Tbs. mixed berry preserves

Ingredients for Flatbread (Focaccia)

1½ cups all-purpose flour

½ tsp. salt

2 tsp. baking powder

2½ Tbs. olive oil

1 egg yolk

¾ cup water

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Technique Class: Breads & Spreads for the Holiday Table

A warm slice of bread, fresh from the oven and spread with butter, is one of life's simple pleasures. The delicious taste and aroma of home-baked bread—be it a traditional dinner roll, a slice of warm corn bread or a crispy bread stick—appeal to all of our senses.

Flavored Butters

To prepare each type of flavored butter: In a bowl, using a handheld mixer, beat the butter on medium speed until soft and creamy, about 2 minutes. Add the remaining ingredients and beat until combined, about 1 minute.

Transfer the flavored butter to a butter dish or small bowl and serve immediately, or cover and refrigerate until ready to serve. Make about ½ cup of each butter.

Williams-Sonoma Kitchen

Flatbread (Focaccia)

A favorite in many parts of the world, flatbreads can be flavored with both savory or sweet additions, from a simple sprinkle of coarse salt to fresh herbs, spices, cinnamon sugar, cooked vegetables or fresh fruits. Most pizza dough recipes can be modified to become delicious flatbreads that will add flavor, color and shape to your holiday breadbasket.

Preheat an oven to 450°F.

In a bowl, sift together the flour, salt and baking powder. Make a well in the flour and add ½ Tbs. of the olive oil and the egg yolk. Gradually add the water, mixing the wet ingredients into the flour little by little with a wooden spoon. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and knead until soft, smooth and elastic, about 1 minute. Form the dough into a ball and place in a lightly oiled large bowl. Cover with a kitchen towel and let stand in a warm place until the dough puffs slightly, about 30 minutes.

Lightly oil a 12-by-9-inch rimmed baking sheet. On a lightly floured work surface, roll out the dough into a rectangle to fit the pan. Press into the prepared pan and trim away any excess dough. Drizzle the dough with the remaining 2 Tbs. olive oil. Bake until the edges are beginning to brown, about 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool slightly. Cut into squares and serve warm. Serves 6.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Foods of the World Series, *Barcelona*, by Paul Richardson (Oxmoor House, 2004).

Ingredients for Corn Bread

2 cups yellow cornmeal, preferably stone ground

1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour

⅓ cup sugar

4 tsp. baking powder

1 tsp. salt

1½ cups buttermilk, at room temperature

2 eggs, at room temperature, well beaten

8 Tbs. (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly

*Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Collection Series, *Cornmeal Breads*, by Michael McLaughlin (Simon & Schuster, 2001).*

Ingredients for Dinner Rolls

3½ tsp. active dry yeast

Pinch of sugar

⅓ cup warm water (105° to 115°F)

1 cup tepid buttermilk (90°F)

¼ cup sugar or ¼ cup honey

8 Tbs. (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted

2 eggs, lightly beaten

1 tsp. salt

4½ to 5 cups unbleached all-purpose flour, plus more as needed

Canola oil for greasing

Corn Bread

In a bread this simple, the quality of the ingredients shows. Stone-ground cornmeal is more perishable, since it contains the germ of the corn, but its coarser texture and more intense corn flavor make it a good choice here. Look for it in well-stocked supermarkets and in natural-foods stores. Wonderful when freshly baked, this corn bread can also be dried to use in stuffings.

Preheat an oven to 400°F. Grease a 9-by-13-inch metal baking pan.

In a large bowl, thoroughly stir together the cornmeal, flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. In another bowl, mix together the buttermilk, eggs and butter until just combined. Stir the buttermilk mixture into the cornmeal mixture until just combined. Spread the batter in the prepared pan. Bake until the edges of the corn bread are just beginning to pull away from the sides of the pan and a knife inserted into the center comes out clean, 18 to 20 minutes. Let stand in the pan for at least 5 minutes.

Place a baking sheet over the pan, carefully invert the pan and sheet, and let the corn bread fall onto the sheet. Cut into squares and serve hot or warm. Serves 8 to 10.

*Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Collection Series, *Thanksgiving*, by Michael McLaughlin (Simon & Schuster, 2001).*

Dinner Rolls

In a bowl, sprinkle the yeast and sugar over the warm water and stir to dissolve. Let stand until foamy, about 10 minutes.

In the bowl of an electric stand mixer fitted with the flat beater, combine the buttermilk, sugar, butter, eggs, salt and 1 cup of the flour. Beat on medium-low speed until creamy, about 2 minutes. Add the yeast mixture and 1 cup of the flour and beat for 1 minute. Beat in the remaining flour, ½ cup at a time, until the dough pulls away from the sides of the bowl.

Switch to the dough hook. Knead on low speed, adding flour 1 Tbs. at a time if the dough sticks, until a very soft dough forms, about 1 minute. The dough should be softer than typical bread dough, yet smooth and springy. Transfer the dough to an oiled deep bowl and turn the dough once to coat it. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and let rise at room temperature until doubled in bulk, about 1½ hours.

Grease two 8-inch round cake pans. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured board. Divide the dough in half and roll each half between your palms into a rope 18 inches long. Cut each rope into eighteen 1-inch pieces. Shape each piece into a ball and place the balls, with the sides just touching, in the prepared pans. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and let rise at room temperature until puffy, 30 to 45 minutes.

Preheat an oven to 375°F. Bake the rolls until light golden brown, 18 to 23 minutes. Let cool slightly in the pans or transfer to a wire rack. Serve warm. Makes 36 rolls.

Make-Ahead Tip: The rolls can be baked 1 day in advance. Let cool completely, then wrap them airtight and store at room temperature. Wrap tightly in aluminum foil and rewarm in a 350°F oven for 15 minutes.

*Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Collection Series, *Bread*, by Beth Hensperger (Simon & Schuster, 2002).*

Rustic Walnut No-Knead Bread

This bread does not require kneading, but you must plan ahead: the dough needs to be prepared a day in advance. The trapped moisture in the tightly covered pot helps the bread develop an appealing crusty surface.

In a large bowl, combine the 3 cups flour, the yeast, salt and walnuts. Add the water and stir until blended; the dough will be shaggy and very sticky. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap. Let the dough rest at warm room temperature (about 70°F) until the surface is dotted with bubbles, 12 to 18 hours.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface. Dust the dough with a little flour and fold the dough over itself once or twice. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and let rest for 15 minutes. Using just enough flour to keep the dough from sticking to the work surface or to your fingers, gently and quickly shape the dough into a ball. Generously coat a smooth cotton towel with cornmeal. Place the dough, seam side down, on the towel and dust with more flour or cornmeal. Cover with another towel and let the dough rise until it has more than doubled in bulk and does not readily spring back when poked with a finger, about 2 hours.

About 30 minutes before the dough is ready, place a 3-quart Dutch oven in an oven and preheat to 450°F.

Remove the pot from the oven. Turn the dough, seam side up, into the pot; don’t worry if the dough looks messy. Shake the pot once or twice to distribute the dough in the pot. Cover and bake for 30 minutes. Uncover and bake until the loaf is well browned, 15 to 30 minutes more.

Transfer the pot to a wire rack and let cool for 10 minutes. Using oven mitts, turn the pot on its side and gently turn the bread out of the pot; it will release easily. Let cool slightly, then cut into slices to serve. Makes 1 loaf.

*Adapted from *Cooking in Cast Iron*, by Valerie Aikman-Smith (Weldon-Owen Inc., 2010).*

Classic Baking Powder Biscuits

The key to making featherlight biscuits and scones is minimal handling of the flaky, crumbly dough. You may think the dough needs more kneading to hold together, but the less you work it, the lighter the result will be. When adding the butter, work quickly so it does not melt into the dough before the biscuits go in the oven. If it becomes soft, the biscuits will be tough. Shape the dough on a lightly floured surface, gently pressing and patting it into a thick circle.

Preheat an oven to 450°F. Lightly butter a baking sheet.

In a large bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt. With your fingertips, rub the butter into the flour until the mixture resembles coarse meal, handling it as little as possible. Stir in the milk and blend with a spoon just until all the liquid has been absorbed. With lightly floured hands, work the dough briefly until it barely holds together in a flaky ball.

Ingredients for Rustic Walnut No-Knead Bread

3 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting

¼ tsp. active dry yeast

1¼ tsp. fine sea salt

1 cup coarsely chopped walnuts

1½ cups plus 2 Tbs. water

Cornmeal as needed

*Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Collection Series, *Thanksgiving*, by Michael McLaughlin (Simon & Schuster, 2001).*

*Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Collection Series, *Thanksgiving*, by Michael McLaughlin (Simon & Schuster, 2001).*

Ingredients for Classic Baking Powder Biscuits

2 cups all-purpose flour

2 tsp. baking powder

½ tsp. baking soda

1 tsp. fine sea salt

8 Tbs. (1 stick) cold unsalted butter, cut into ¼-inch dice

⅔ cup milk

Flavored butters or spreads for serving

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