

Hearty Dark Deli Rye Bread

1) Make the starter

Combine ingredients below in your stand mixer bowl. Whisk until you have a smooth, thick batter. This makes the wet sponge.

- 3/4 cup bread flour
- 3/4 cup dark rye flour
- 1/2 teaspoon instant yeast
- 1 tablespoon cane sugar
- 1 tablespoon buckwheat honey (buckwheat honey gives the bread an authentic malty flavor; you can use another type of honey, but it might taste a little on the sweet side)
- 1 1/2 cups room temperature water

In a separate bowl, mix the following dry ingredients together:

- 2 1/4 cups bread flour
- 1/2 plus 1/8 teaspoon instant yeast
- 2 tablespoons caraway seeds
- 1/2 tablespoon kosher salt

Spread the dry mixture evenly over the wet sponge mixture in the mixer bowl to cover it completely.

Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and allow it to **ferment for 3 hours** at room temperature.

2) Mix the dough & first rise

Add 1/2 tablespoon vegetable oil to your stand mixer bowl with the sponge and flour mixture, and blend with the dough hook on low speed until the flour is moistened enough to form a rough dough (about a minute).

Up the speed to medium and mix it for 10 minutes. The dough should be very smooth and elastic. If it's sticky, turn it out on a floured board and knead in a little extra flour.

Place the dough in a large, lightly oiled bowl. Flip the dough in the bowl to moisten the top and sides with oil.

Let the dough to **rise until doubled, 1 1/2 to 2 hours**.

3) Shape the dough & 2nd Rise

Flip the bowl over and let the dough fall out on to a lightly floured board, shape gently into a ball.

Put the dough ball back into a re-oiled bowl, cover the bowl with plastic wrap, and **let it rise 45 minutes.**

4) Form loaf & 3rd rise

Place a bread or pizza stone in the oven on a shelf at the lowest level. Then put a rimmed sheet pan on floor of oven. Preheat the oven to 450F.

Turn the dough out onto your lightly floured board and gently round it into a ball again. Sprinkle a light layer of cornmeal on a large cast iron skillet. Place the dough in the skillet. Cover it with oiled plastic wrap and **let it rise until almost doubled, about 1 hour.**

5) Bake

Uncover the dough and make a cross hatch of ¼"-deep slashes across the top of the dough with a sharp knife.

Mist the dough with water and gently set the skillet on the hot stone.

Toss ½ cup of ice cubes into the rimmed sheet pan and immediately shut the door.

Bake for 15 minutes, lower the temperature to 400F and continue baking for 30 minutes or until a thermometer inserted into the center reads 190F.