

## Classic Soda Bread

### Rating



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I frequently turn to soda bread when the bread bin is bare. If there's nothing for lunch or to serve with soup for supper, it's a quick and simple answer - and sustaining, too. This classic recipe lends itself to endless tweaking and variation. Slot it into your repertoire and you'll never regret it.

**Prep time** 15 minutes

**Cook time** 40-45 minutes

**Servings** Makes 1 medium loaf

- Ingredients**
- \* 500g plain flour
  - \* 2 tsp bicarbonate of soda
  - \* 1 tsp fine sea salt
  - \* Approx. 400ml buttermilk or live yoghurt
  - \* A little milk, if necessary

- Directions**
1. Sift the flour and bicarbonate of soda into a large mixing bowl and stir in the salt. Make a well in the centre and pour in the buttermilk, stirring as you go. If necessary, add a tablespoon or two of milk to bring the mixture together; it should form a soft dough, just this side of sticky.
  2. Tip it out on to a lightly floured work surface and knead lightly for about a minute, just long enough to pull it together into a loose ball but no longer - you need to get it into the oven while the bicarb is still doing its stuff. You're not looking for the kind of smooth, elastic dough you'd get with a yeast-based bread.
  3. Put the round of dough on a lightly floured baking sheet and dust generously with flour. Mark a deep cross in it with a sharp, serrated knife, cutting about two-thirds of the way through the loaf. Put it in an oven preheated to 200°C/gas mark 6 and bake for 40-45 minutes, until the loaf sounds hollow when tapped underneath.
  4. Cool on a wire rack if you like a crunchy crust, or wrap in a clean tea towel if you prefer a soft crust. Soda bread is best eaten while still warm, spread with salty butter and/or a dollop of your favourite jam. But if you have some left over the next day, it makes great toast.

### Variation:

For six-seed soda bread, mix together 2 tablespoons each of sunflower, pumpkin,

sesame, poppy and linseeds, plus 1 teaspoon of fennel seeds; set aside. Follow the main recipe but use half white flour and half wholemeal flour. Add all but 1 tablespoon of the seeds to the dry ingredients before proceeding as above. After cutting a cross in the top of the loaf, brush it with a little buttermilk or ordinary milk and sprinkle with the remaining seeds. Bake at 200°C/gas mark 6 for 40–45 minutes.

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