

## Dutch Oven Bread

1 large loaf from 26 cm Dutch oven

### Ingredients

- 520 g all-purpose flour
- 360 ml water (start with 330 ml; hold back 30 ml)
- 3.6 g instant dry yeast
- 9 g fine salt (or salt + MSG blend)
- Vegetable oil or spray (for pot)



### Method

#### 1. Initial mix and autolyse

Combine **flour** and **330 ml water** in the bowl of a stand mixer.

Mix just until no dry flour remains.

Cover and **rest 20 minutes.**

#### 2. Dough development

Add **yeast** and **salt**.

Mix on **medium-low speed** for **6–8 minutes.**

Add remaining **water** a little at a time only if needed.

**End-of-mix target:**

- Dough clears the bowl
- Soft and slightly tacky
- Cohesive, not pourable
- Windowpane forms without tearing

#### 3. First rise

Cover and let rise at room temperature until doubled and slow to spring back when pressed.

Approximate time: **2–3 hours.**

#### 4. Shaping (critical for height)

Turn dough out and gently degas.

Shape immediately into a loose round.

**Rest 5 minutes only.**

**Final shaping:**

Pull the surface tight to build strong tension.

Seal the base firmly.

Dough should feel springy and resistant.

#### 5. Second rise (in pot)

Lightly **oil** the Dutch oven.

Place dough seam-side down in the pot.

Cover and let rise until noticeably puffy and filling about half the pot width.

Approximate time: **45–60 minutes.**

#### 6. Baking

Preheat oven to **230°C.**

Score dough decisively (one large slash down middle).

**Cover and bake 30 minutes.**

**Remove lid,** reduce oven to **190°C,** and **bake 15–20 minutes more.**

Finished bread should be deeply browned, hollow-sounding, and about 92°C internally.

## 7. Cooling

Remove bread and **cool on a rack at least 45 minutes** before slicing.

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### Expected Results

- Dough fills  $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{2}{3}$  of the pot before baking.
- Strong vertical oven spring (30–40%).
- Clearly domed loaf, not spread.
- Classic open crumb suitable for table use or croutons.

### Diagnostic Notes

If dough spreads more than 2–3 cm within 5 minutes after shaping, hydration is too high.

If loaf is low despite good rise, focus on shaping tension rather than yeast quantity.

### Key Lessons from Previous Bake

- Over-hydration causes weak structure.
- Late-added flour cannot fully correct dough balance.
- Wide Dutch oven magnifies spreading.
- More yeast will not improve height.