

WARNING!

Ask a grown-up for help when removing the hot tray from the oven.

THE LAB

Eight pages of things to make and do

Kitchen chemistry

Bake soda bread

Rustle up this delicious loaf for a winter breakfast treat.

What you need

- 170g wholemeal flour
- 170g plain flour, with extra for dusting surfaces
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 290ml buttermilk
- Large mixing bowl
- Fork
- Baking tray
- Knife
- Wire rack

Instructions

- 1** Weigh out the two types of flour and combine them with the salt and bicarbonate of soda in the bowl. Mix them together well.
- 2** Make a hole in the centre of the dry ingredients with the fork. Then pour in the buttermilk, mixing quickly. Continue stirring until you have a soft dough.
- 3** If the dough looks too stiff, add a little milk. Be careful not to add so much it becomes too sticky or wet. Preheat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan-assisted).
- 4** Flop the dough onto a clean surface dusted with flour and knead it briefly to make sure everything is well combined. Then, bring it to a round shape and flatten it a little.
- 5** Place the round dough on a lightly floured baking tray and cut a cross into the top. Pop it into the oven and set a timer for 30 minutes.
- 6** When the time is up, remove the bread from the oven and tap the base (careful – it will be very hot!). If the loaf sounds hollow, it's ready. Cool on a wire rack and serve with butter and jam.



Knead just a little to make sure gas inside the dough stays trapped.

How does it work?

Most breads use yeast – a type of fungus that produces gases that make the dough rise. However, soda bread rises because of a chemical reaction. When bicarbonate of soda combines with lactic acid in buttermilk (a dairy product that's thicker than normal milk), it reacts, releasing bubbles of carbon dioxide gas. This reaction is quicker than using yeast, resulting in a speedy loaf that doesn't need to "prove" (sit around) for hours before it goes into the oven. Cutting a cross in the top allows heat to get inside the rising loaf.

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