

# EIGHT-STRAND PLAITED WHITE BREAD

Makes 1 loaf | Total Time: About 4 hours

## DIRECTIONS

**Step 1:** Mix together the yeast, sugar and 75 ml of warm water into a small bowl. Let this sit for around 10 minutes in order for the yeast to activate. After 10 minutes, the mixture should be foamy on top. Then in a large mixing bowl, pour in the flour and add the yeast mixture on top. Use your hands to mix this together and then add in the salt, butter and  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the remaining 325 ml of cool water. Mix this together with your hands. Add in the remaining water, a little at a time, until all of the flour has been picked up from the sides of the bowl. You might not have to add all of the water, or alternatively, you might have to add more water. You want the dough to be soft, but not soggy. Form the mixture into a rough dough.

**Step 2:** Coat a clean work surface with a little bit of olive oil and then tip out the dough, kneading it for 5-10 minutes. At first, there will be a wet stage, but if you keep kneading, eventually, the dough will start to form a soft, smooth skin. At this point, put the dough into a lightly oiled bowl (large). Cover with plastic wrap and leave to rise for about 1 hour (leaving it for 2 or 3 hours is fine too) or until at least doubled in size.

**Step 3:** Once the dough has risen, scrape it out of the bowl onto a lightly floured work surface. Knock all of the air out and divide it into 8 equal pieces. Then roll each piece into a 16 in (40 cm) log/sausage. Lay the rolled-out pieces onto a lightly floured surface with the top ends gathered together. Tack the gathered ends to the work surface to hold them in place as you work/braid. **Step 4:** As the strands of dough are laid out in front of you, number the strands 1-8. Number 1 will be the strand farthest to the left as you look at the strands and number 8 will be the strand farthest to the right. Every time you move a strand, the numbers will still be 1-8 in front of you (the number is referring to the position, not to the specific strand).

**Step 5:** First, take 8 under 7 and over 1. This step you only do once at the start.

**Step 6:** Then repeat the following steps until the plait is finished: Take 8 over 5, take 2 under 3 over 8, take 1 over 4, and take 7 under 6.

**Step 7:** Once you've reached the end of the plait, use a bench scraper or your hands and chop the dough on each end to give you nice, sharp ends. Once you do this, tidy up the ends as needed. Place the loaf on a parchment paper-lined cookie sheet and put into a plastic bag, leaving it to prove for about 1 hour (until the dough has doubled in size).

**Step 8:** While waiting for the bread to prove for the last time, preheat the oven to 450° F and place a roasting tin on the bottom rack inside the oven. After the dough has risen and the oven has fully preheated, fill the hot roasting pan with hot water (in order to create the steam needed for a good crust). Then take the bread out of the plastic bag and quickly put the bread into the oven. Bake for 30 minutes or until it is fully cooked and hollow sounding when tapped on the bottom. Cool on a wire rack before slicing.

## INGREDIENTS

600 grams bread flour

12 grams active dry yeast

1 tsp sugar

12 grams salt

35 grams unsalted butter, softened

400 ml water

Olive oil for kneading