

STRUAN (GERMAN HARVEST BREAD)

INGREDIENTS

Sponge:

½ cup whole wheat flour

¼ cup rye flour

1 cup room temperature water

Rice:

1/3 cup brown rice

1 ½ cup of warm water

Bread:

2 cups bread flour (plus at least 3 more cups to be added later, see below)

1/2 cup barley flour (or more rye flour)

1/2 cup uncooked polenta (or stone-ground cornmeal)

1/2 cup oats

2 tablespoons of instant yeast (if you use rapid rise yeast, you can cut the rise time in half with each rise)

1/2 cup brown sugar

1/4 cup honey

1 cup buttermilk

METHOD

For the sponge: Combine sponge ingredients well in a medium bowl. Cover with plastic and punch holes in the top with a fork to allow the sponge to breathe. Set aside to culture overnight.

The next day, brown rice slowly in 1 cup of water. Allow to cool down until it is about 115-120°.

Combine sponge and remaining ingredients well and beat smooth with a wooden spoon. Then, add more bread flour, in one cup increments. You will need to add at least another 3 cups of flour. Add flour until you have a tacky, but not sticky dough.

Turn out onto a board and, knead for a long time. (Since this dough is so full of whole grains, it takes a lot of kneading to bring it to the right texture.) You may need to add another cup of flour to the bread as you knead it until it stops sticking to the board.

Place in a large, lightly-oiled bowl and allow to rise for about 2 hours, or until it had doubled in size. (If you use rapid rise yeast, 1 hour is probably enough.)

Punch dough down and knead for a few minutes. Then divide into thirds. You may shape it into rounds and put on cookie sheets, or form it into three loaves and place in to loaf pans. Whichever method you choose, allow the dough to rise again for a couple of hours in a warm environment.

Bake in a 350° preheated oven for 30-45 minutes, or perhaps longer for loaves. You will know it is done when a thermometer inserted in the center reads 185-190 degrees (F). Don't let it get hotter than this, or it will be too crumbly when it is done.

Remove from baking pans as soon as you can and allow to cool on a wire rack for at least an hour before slicing.