

Old Milwaukee Rye

AMERICA Until I arrived in Madison, Wisconsin, in the mid-1960s to attend grad school, my only experience of rye bread was with the Jewish ryes, corn ryes, and caramel-colored pumpernickels of the Jewish bakeries in my native New York. So when I first tasted the ubiquitous Milwaukee rye, I was both intrigued with its sweetness and skeptical that people had the nerve to call it rye bread when everyone knew that the only real rye bread was the stuff I'd grown up with.

What I didn't know and hardly thought about was the bread's pedigree. Just as Eastern European Jews brought the rye breads of Russia, Poland, and Ukraine to New York, so did the Poles and Germans who gave Milwaukee its character bring their sweet, spicy rye breads. It didn't take long for this bread to grow on me, especially paired with Wisconsin favorites like liverwurst and Polish mustard, Wisconsin cheddar cheese, and summer sausage.

RYE %: 45%

STAGES: Sponge, final dough

LEAVEN: Rye sour culture, yeast

START TO FINISH: 10–15 hours

HANDS-ON TIME: 25–30 minutes

YIELD: Two 1½ lb./680 g loaves

INGREDIENT	GRAMS	OUNCES	VOLUME	BAKER'S PERCENTAGE
Medium rye flour	180	6.35	1⅜ cups	100%
Warm (105°F/41°C) water	260	9.15	1⅛ cups	144%
Rye sour culture (see page 35)	48	1.70	¼ cup	27%

1. Mix the sponge ingredients by hand until incorporated, cover, and ferment at room temperature (68–72°F/20–22°C) overnight, 10–12 hours. The sponge will be very bubbly, have a clean sour smell, and will have doubled in volume.

FINAL DOUGH (Day 2, Morning)

INGREDIENT	GRAMS	OUNCES	VOLUME
Sponge	488	17.20	Use all
Bread flour	480	16.95	3⅛ cups
Medium rye flour	216	7.60	1⅝ cups
Warm (105°F/41°C) water	204	7.20	1 cup less 2 Tbs.
Salt	14	0.50	2½ tsp.

Instant yeast	6	0.20	2 tsp.
Unsulphured dark molasses	68	2.40	¼ cup
Beaten egg	44	1.55	3 Tbs.
Unsalted butter, melted	34	1.20	2½ Tbs.
Caraway seed	6	0.20	1 Tbs.
Flour for dusting	As needed		
Cornmeal for dusting	As needed		
Caraway seed for topping	6	0.20	1 Tbs.

2. Add the sponge, all but about 1½ cups of the bread flour, the rye flour, the warm water, the salt, the yeast, the molasses, the egg, and the butter to the stand mixer. Make an egg wash by mixing any unused egg with 15 ml/1 Tbs. of milk or water and refrigerate until needed. Use the dough hook at low (KA2) speed to mix, gradually adding the remaining flour, and scraping down as necessary until the dough leaves the sides of the bowl, 8–10 minutes. Cover and ferment at room temperature until doubled in bulk, 45–50 minutes.
3. Turn the dough onto a lightly floured work surface, knead it back to its original volume, and divide into two pieces weighing about 780 g/27 oz. each. Form each piece into a football-shaped loaf and set on a cornmeal-covered peel, if using a baking stone, or a parchment-lined sheet pan. Cover and proof at room temperature until the surface of the dough shows cracks, 30–40 minutes.
4. Preheat the oven to 375°F/190°C with a steam pan (see page 76) and the baking surface in the middle. Brush each loaf with the reserved egg wash and sprinkle generously with caraway seed. Use a sharp knife or razor blade to slash the loaves three times crosswise to a depth of ¼–½ inch/0.6–1.25 cm. Bake for 10 minutes with steam, then remove the steam pan and continue baking until the loaf thumps when tapped with a finger and the internal temperature is at least 198°F/92°C, 30–35 minutes. Transfer to a rack and cool thoroughly before slicing.

BAKER'S PERCENTAGES

INGREDIENT	G	%
TOTAL FLOUR	876	100.00%
Bread flour	480	54.79%
Medium rye flour	396	45.21%

Water	464	52.97%
Salt	14	1.64%
Instant yeast	6	0.68%
Molasses	68	7.76%
Egg	44	5.02%
Butter	34	3.93%
Caraway seed	6	0.64%
Rye sour culture	48	5.48%
TOTAL FORMULA	1,560	178.12%
Total flour prefermented	180	20.55%

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