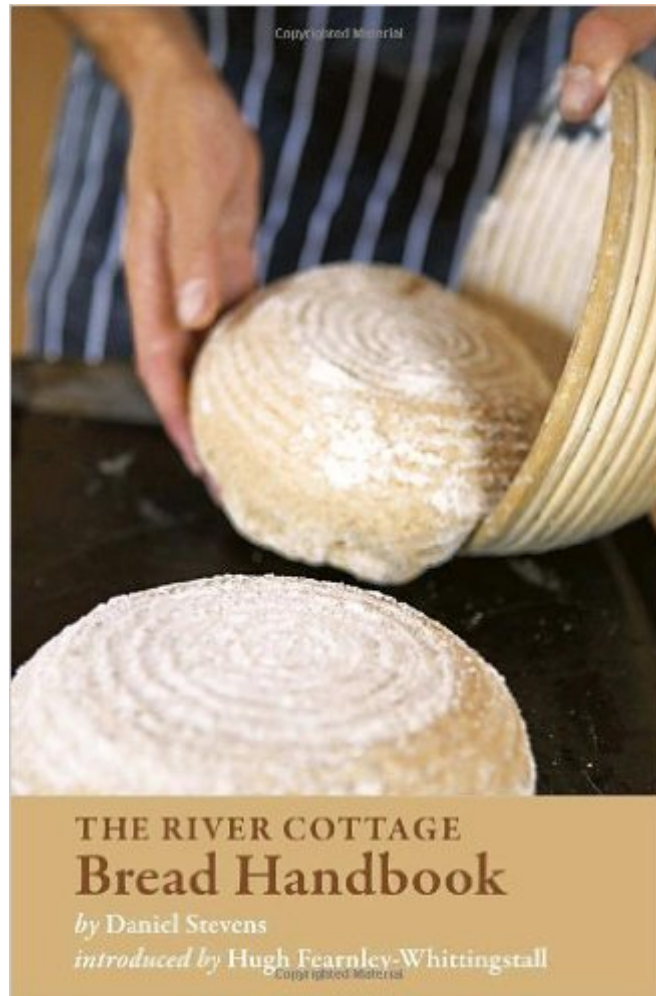


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The River Cottage Bread Handbook



Synopsis

The River Cottage farm, established by British food personality Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall to promote high-quality, local, and sustainable food, has inspired a television series, restaurants and classes, and a hit series of books. In this new addition to the award-winning collection, River Cottage baking instructor Daniel Stevens shares his irrepressible enthusiasm and knowledge to help you bake better bread. From familiar classics such as ciabatta and pizza dough, to new challenges like potato bread, rye loaves, tortillas, naan, croissants, doughnuts, and bagels, each easy-to-follow recipe is accompanied by full-color, step-by-step photos. There's even an in-depth chapter on building your own backyard wood-fired oven.

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Customer Reviews

'The River Cottage Bread Handbook' is interesting, in that it gives very different recipes from many cultures, some are rather advanced for a beginner bread baker, but yet there is a very good 30+ page instructional section on how to bake bread. It shows the dough at different stages which would help those beginning bakers that seem to have a terror of baking bread to know what they should expect their product to look like. The book is a small size about 8"x5", the pages are heavy so you will need to weight it down in order to keep your place while cooking. Despite the smaller page size the print is easy to read. There are plenty of pictures, both of techniques, dough and finished bread products. The introduction is interesting, telling why mass made machine bread is bad for you. Baking equipment needed is described. The recipes themselves are given with weight, grams and

ounces - this originally is an English cookbook, but has been `translated' in `American'. There is a section on wild yeast, basically what Americans call sourdough - making your own yeast. The many breads from different cultures are probably too ambitious for a beginning cook, but would be interesting to try none the less if they are adventuresome; including roti - bread from India and Nepal, tortillas and crackers. A section is included on what to do with left over bread and even how to build your own clay oven. This is not the ordinary bread book, it would seem to be for someone looking for a bit of venturesome baking.

I'm a chef with a ton of food allergies (a true oxymoron, I know). My worst allergy is corn, and almost all store-bought breads use high-fructose corn syrup. It's cheap for flavor, texture, and preservation. I've have had baking classes but never really "got" the whole bread-making process. Wish I had paid better attention in culinary school now that this allergy is wreaking havoc and I have to bake my own breads. Enter "The River Cottage Bread Handbook". I read through it in less than an hour, and got going on a sour dough starter right away. I didn't want to wait that long for bread, so I started with the walnut honey bread. Oh My God - it was delicious. I've also used Stevens' scones recipe and, while it was much different than my go-to recipe - Stevens' is more tender and flaky than a typical American scone - it was out of this world. I wouldn't recommend this book to someone who is deathly afraid of yeast breads. You have to approach these recipes with a sense of confidence. However, once you can grasp Baker's Percentage and feel a little adventurous, you'll be SO glad you bought this book. The illustrations are beautiful, and Stevens' sense of humor is truly appreciated.

I have always wanted to learn to bake bread, but never thought I had the time or talent to do it right. On vacation this summer I ran across this book in a cookbook shop and requested it for Christmas. Lucky me that my husband was listening! This book is super. I spent a good plane ride reading it from start to finish. The step-by-step guide to bread baking, almost a breadmaking 101, introduced the equipment and explained the importance of each ingredient. The basic recipe that can be altered at will was a great way to introduce creativity into baking, something I've always thought of as quite rigid. I have made almost 10 batches of bread (30 loaves!) now using the basic recipe and I'm having a blast! It's wonderful to see, feel and taste the difference one ingredient can make. I'm also gaining great confidence in my ability to "do it right" and yet be creative. From this book I now understand what the dough should "feel" like, how the yeast should smell and what happened when my first loaves came out too chewy. I've also made the breadsticks, foccacia and, this evening, the

bagels. All of the recipes were straight-forward and easy to follow - especially after taking the time to read the book cover-to-cover. My family is thrilled with my new hobby and so am I. This book is great. I recommend it for everyone, especially beginners.

I'm comfortable in the kitchen and have put together many a good meal, both from recipe and from good old fashion scratch. That said, baking bread always gave me pause. The litany of bread baking advice found online and in many cookbooks ranges from scientific to something like alchemy and none inspired in me much confidence to knead or even not knead bread (nor did the few I tried lead to well baked bread!). This book changed all that. I can bake bread now. The style is detailed in a way that most recipe books are not and in a way that I actually learn from. For example, if you are the type of person who encounters in a bread recipe "shape the dough into a round" and angrily wonders "HOW IS THE RIGHT WAY TO DO THAT?!" then this book is for you (hint: the Handbook describes in detail how to shape dough into a round). Best of all, the resulting bread is fantastic. I've not tried all the yeasted dough recipes but those I have (doughnuts, bagels, english muffins, pizza dough) all turned out better in texture and taste than others I'd tried pre-Handbook. Sourdough took me a while to get but now I kick ass at that too. All thanks to the River Cottage Bread Handbook.

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