



## Classic Country Bread

In my 40-plus years of being Greek, I've noticed one thing -- Greek cuisine must be made fresh, it must be wonderfully fragrant, and it must be served as if you were serving it to your own family. Everything that comes out of my kitchen at Xios Authentic Greek Cuisine is prepared that way, from all of us to you!

For every Greek person that I have ever met, olives and bread are *the* two primary food groups. Did you know that the olive groves of modern Greece date back to 450 B.C., when olive oil was initially recognized as an extremely valuable export? Eating bread with olives is a centuries-old tradition!

The following is a recipe for classic country bread. Here are the ingredients that you'll need:

2 tablespoons of honey

1 lightly-beaten egg

1 cup of warm water

2 tablespoons of active dry yeast

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup warm milk

2 tablespoons of olive oil

2 teaspoons sea salt (Why sea salt? I'll explain in the next newsletter.)

2 tablespoons unsalted, melted butter

5 to 5  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups of whole-wheat flour

Sprinkle the yeast over  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of the warm water and set aside until it gets foamy. Next mix the honey, milk, egg, salt, remaining water, half of the butter, and 1 tablespoon of the olive oil together in a bowl. Take 3 cups of the flour and sift it into a large mixing bowl. Make a well in the center, and mix in the honey mixture and the yeast mixture. Knead for at least 10 minutes, adding more of the remaining flour until you get a smooth, firm, elastic dough. Form a ball with the dough and ensure that the top is moist; if you have to, take a little more olive oil and moisten the top of the dough ball. Tightly cover the bowl

and place it in a warm spot for approximately 1 ½ hours, or until it doubles in size.

Lightly oil (spray) two baking sheets. Punch down the dough and form two round loaves, placing one loaf on each sheet. Cover again (a clean, dry dishtowel will do nicely), and set them aside in a warm spot for another hour to rise again. (I like to use my oven to let my dough rise. Turn the oven on warm for 5-10 minutes, turn it off and place the dough in to rise. If it's not rising, turn the oven on again to re-warm it until the bread starts to rise.)

Take the risen bread out of the oven and pre-heat the oven to 375 degrees. Brush the loaves with the remaining olive oil and butter and bake for about 40 minutes, or until lightly browned. One sure way to check to see if the bread is done is to tap the bottom of the loaf. If it sounds hollow, it's done. Let it cool on a rack.

I like, no *love*, to serve this bread warm with some feta cheese, some of those olives I talked about earlier, some nice fresh tomatoes and a glass of wine. Just close your eyes and picture yourself enjoying this meal looking out over the crystal blue waters off the Island of Xios, watching the boats drifting by! That's Greek life, my friends.