

Dough Starter (Sponge): Minimum 1 1/2 hour, Maximum 24 hours
Minimum Rising Time: About 3 1/4 hours
Oven Temperature: 375°F.
Baking Time: 50 to 60 minutes

Cranberry Walnut Bread

Makes: An 18 inch by 6 inch by 4 inch high loaf
 4 pounds / 1855 grams

Cranberries

INGREDIENTS	MEASURE	WEIGHT	
		<i>ounces</i>	<i>grams</i>
	<i>volume</i>		
dried cranberries	2 cups	10 ounces	288 grams
hot water	1 liquid cup	8.3 ounces	236 grams

1) Soak the cranberries

In a small bowl, place the cranberries and water. Cover with plastic wrap and let the dried fruit soak until it is softened and plump, stirring once, for 30 minutes. Drain the cranberries, reserving the liquid in a 2 cup liquid measure. (You should have 3/4 cup.) Add enough water to come to the 2 cup level and set it aside covered. If planning to mix the dough the next day, cover the cranberries and water with plastic wrap and refrigerate them overnight.

Flour Mixture

INGREDIENTS	MEASURE	WEIGHT	
		<i>ounces</i>	<i>grams</i>
	<i>volume</i>		
walnuts halves	4 cups	14 ounces	400 grams
whole wheat flour, preferably stone ground	2/3 cup	3.5 ounces	100 grams
bread flour, preferably Gold Medal	2 cups	11 ounces	312 grams
instant yeast (also known as Instant Active Dry, Perfect Rise, Rapid Rise, and QuickRise)	1 teaspoon	•	3.2 grams

2) Prepare the walnuts and flour mixture

In a preheated 325F. oven, toast the walnuts very lightly for 7 minutes. to bring out their flavor and loosen the skins but do not brown them. Transfer them to a clean towel and while still hot, rub them to remove as much of the bitter skin as possible. Coarsely break 3 cups of the walnuts and set them aside. Place the remaining 1 cup of walnut halves in a food processor along with the whole wheat flour and process for about a minute or until ground fine. Pulse in the bread flour and yeast. Set it aside.

Dough Starter (Sponge)

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		<i>ounces</i>	<i>grams</i>
	<i>volume</i>		
bread flour	2 cups	11 ounces	312 grams
instant yeast (also known as Instant Active Dry, Perfect Rise, Rapid Rise, and QuickRise)	1/2 tablespoon	•	4.8 grams
malt powder or barley malt syrup, or sugar	2 tablespoons	0.6 ounce 1.5 ounces scant 1 ounce	18.6 grams 42 grams 25 grams
reserved cranberry water, room temperature (70 to 90°F.)	2 liquid cups	16.7 ounces	472 grams

Equipment: A 20-inch long baking sheet, preferably Cushionaire or a double layer of 2 baking sheets, top 1 lined with parchment, or sprinkled with flour or corn meal.

Early in the morning or the night before prepare the cranberries, walnuts, and start the dough starter (sponge)

3) Make the dough starter (sponge)

In a large bowl (mixer bowl if using a stand mixer), place the bread flour, yeast, malt, or sugar, and water. Whisk until very smooth to incorporate air, about 2 minutes. The dough will be the consistency of a thick batter. Scrape down the sides. Lightly spoon the ground nut/flour mixture on top of the sponge. Cover it tightly with plastic wrap and allow it to ferment for 1 hour or up to 4 hours at room temperature. The batter beneath the flour will be very bubbly and spongy in texture. Some of it will break through the flour mixture.

Dough

INGREDIENTS	MEASURE	WEIGHT	
		<i>ounces</i>	<i>grams</i>
	<i>volume</i>		
salt	2 1/2 teaspoons	0.5 ounces	16.5 grams
granular lecithin or vegetable oil	2 tablespoons 2 tablespoons	0.5 ounce about 1 ounce	12.8 grams 27 grams
reserved broken walnuts	3 cups	•	•
reserved cranberries	2 full cups	•	•
bread flour for kneading	1/2 cup	2.7 ounces	78 grams

4) Mix the dough

Hand Method

Add the salt and with a wooden spoon or one hand, stir the flour mixture into the sponge. Stir in the lecithin or oil, the broken walnuts and the cranberries and mix to distribute them throughout the dough, adding a little of the flour, as needed, to keep the dough from sticking. Knead the dough in the bowl until it comes together and then scrape it onto a

lightly floured counter. Knead the dough for 5 minutes, enough to develop the gluten structure a little, adding as little flour as possible to keep it from sticking. Use the bench scraper to scrape the dough and gather it together as you knead it. At this point it will be very sticky. Cover it with the inverted bowl and allow it to rest for 5 up to 20 minutes. (This resting time will make the dough less sticky and easier to work with.)

Knead the dough for another 5 minutes or until it is very smooth and elastic. It should be soft but not stick to your fingers. If the dough is sticky, add some of the remaining flour or a little extra. (The dough should weigh about 4 1/2 pounds / 2000 grams.)

Mixer Method

Add the lecithin or oil, and with the dough hook, mix on low (#2 Kitchen Aid) about 1 minute, until the flour is moistened, to form a soft rough dough. Scrape down any bits of dough. Cover the top of the bowl with plastic wrap and allow the dough to rest for 20 minutes.

Sprinkle on salt and knead the dough on medium speed (#4 Kitchen Aid) for 7 minutes. The dough should be smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes. After the first 3 minutes, if the dough still appears sticky and does not begin to pull away from the bowl, add a little of the flour a tablespoon at a time. Sprinkle the counter lightly with a little more of this flour. Place the dough on top and cover it with plastic wrap. Allow it to sit for 10 minutes to relax the gluten. Roll the dough into a rectangle (about 14 inches by 18 inches). Sprinkle the cranberries and walnuts evenly over the dough and starting from the short end, roll up the dough as you would a jelly roll. (Do not use the machine to mix in the cranberries and nuts as they will break down and result in a dark compact crumb.)

Form the dough into a ball and knead it lightly. After the cranberries are added the dough becomes a little tacky (sticky) and will need a little more of the extra flour. (The dough should weigh about 4 1/2 pounds / 2000 grams.)

Both Methods

5) Let the dough rise

Place the dough into a 4 quart dough rising container or bowl, greased lightly with cooking spray or oil. Push down the dough and lightly spray or oil the top of the dough. cover the container with a lid or plastic wrap. With a piece of tape mark on the side of the container approximately where double the height would be. Allow the dough to rise (ideally at 75°F to 80°F) until doubled, 1 1/2 to 2 hours.

Using an oiled spatula or dough scraper, remove the dough to a floured counter and press down on it gently to form a rectangle. Give it 1 business letter turn (I), round the edges and set it back in the container. Again, oil the surface, cover, mark where double the height will now be and allow it to rise until doubled, about 1 to 1/2 hours. (It will fill it fuller than before because it is puffier with air).

6) Shape the dough and let it rise

Turn the dough onto a lightly floured counter. Press down on it or roll it to form a rectangle and shape it into a 16 inch long torpedo shaped loaf (batard). It will be about 4 inches wide by 3 inches high. Set the dough on a baking sheet lined with non-stick liner or parchment. Cover it with a large container or oiled plastic wrap. Let the dough rise until almost doubled and when pressed gently with a finger the depression very slowly fills in, 45 minutes to 1 hour (17 1/2 inches by 6 inches by 3 1/2 inches high).

7) Preheat the oven

30 minutes before baking preheat the oven to 400°F. Have the oven shelf at the next to lowest level and set a cast iron pan or sheet pan on the floor of the oven before preheating.

8) Slash and bake the bread

Allow it to sit uncovered for 5 minutes to dry slightly. With a sharp knife or straight edged razor blade, make 1/4- to 1/2-inch deep horizontal slashes in the top of the dough about 1 1/2 inches apart.

Mist the dough with water and quickly but gently set the baking sheet on the oven rack. Toss 1/2 cup of ice cubes into the pan beneath. Immediately shut the door and bake 5 minutes. Lower the heat to 375°F. and continue baking 45 to 55 minutes or until the crust is golden and a skewer inserted in the middle comes out clean. (An instant read thermometer inserted into the center will read about 190°F.) Tent loosely with foil after the first 35 minutes of baking or when it gets very brown. Halfway through baking, turn the pan halfway around for even baking.

9) Cool the bread

Remove the bread from the oven, lift it from the pan, and transfer it to a wire rack to cool completely, top-side up (at least 2 hours).

Ultimate Full Flavor Variation

For the best flavor development, in step #2 allow the sponge to ferment for 1 hour at room temperature and then refrigerate it for 8 up to 24 hours. If using the hand mixing method, remove it from the refrigerator about 1 hour before going on to the next step of mixing the dough.)

Pointers for Success

© Unbleached all purpose flour can be used for this bread but I prefer bread flour which is more firm to the chew as it is more compatible with the texture of the cranberries and nuts.

♥ Lecithin, available in health food stores, will extend the bread's freshness for a second day.

♥ Don't set the pan on a preheated baking stone as this bread tends to brown faster and could over-brown.

UNDERSTANDING

Soaking the cranberries not only softens them but also produces a naturally sweetened liquid that permeates the bread and turns the crust a magnificent golden brown.

The walnuts are toasted very lightly to keep them from turning blue in the crumb. As some of the nuts work their way to the top of the crust and continue to brown, it is best to toast them only lightly.

This bread takes longer to rise because of the extra weight of the whole wheat flour, cranberries and nuts. Extra risings makes the grain more even and lighter.

A softer dough results in a lighter texture ideal for this bread. Don't work in too much flour.

If using malt syrup instead of malt powder, it will produce a browner crumb instead of the rosy hue. As the long baking required for this large loaf and the cranberry soaking water containing sugar conspire to making a very brown crust, this bread should not be baked on a baking stone.