

Soft Spelt Baguette



The true French baguette is a 20th Century invention¹ intended to be made with refined flour. It is known for the attractive leaf pattern on a long thin loaf with crispy crust and open crumb texture. Slices are usually on the diagonal to produce an elegant oval, exactly right as the base for party canapés - tasty but crusty morsels for grown-ups! But what about those hungry children who have not yet acquired a full set of adult teeth, and the elderly who no longer possess the teeth of their youth?

As an alternative I wanted to make a loaf that would still give oval slices but that is whole grain, soft textured, and crustless! It can be done by steam baking the loaf in a baking-paper lined perforated baguette pan. The leaf pattern with some flour types is lost, expansion of the loaf during steaming is gradual and completely accommodated sometimes without the need to make cuts. The resulting loaf lacks the appealing crustiness of a true baguette, but an elegant oval, soft, whole grain and crustless slice for canapés is still made possible.

Spelt is a soft wheat the best of which yields a gently elastic dough. Interestingly spelt is simply a wheat type and within the type there are many variations in flour strength. Just before baking, some spelt doughs are elastic enough to accommodate the typical leaf cuts, others tend to split during baking and so are best slashed on the surface the length of the loaf, and others can stretch enough without splitting that no cuts in the surface are needed. Although other wheat types could be used, spelt rises to the occasion well in the form of this soft baguette.

Please note that the mature malt sourdough starter used in this recipe is always matured until there is no further gaseous fermentation and the acidity is at a maximum. In this way, only the most acid tolerant of yeast varieties are consistently present in saturation quantities. Other starters not brought to maturity in this way, may not give satisfactory results. It is also important when using large amounts of enzyme active malt in a dough, to allow a total fermentation time that is sufficiently long for enough acidity to develop to counteract the effects of the malt enzymes before baking. A recipe for this type of malt sourdough starter can be found at www.wholegrainconnection.org. The direct link is: <http://www.wholegrainconnection.org/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/3simplemaltourdoughstarter.pdf>

¹ Michel Suas. *Advanced Bread & Pastry*, Delmar Cengage Learning, New York. 2009

Amounts are for one short baguette (14 inches or 35 cm)
 Assuming 16 slices per loaf: one slice contains 17grams whole grains and 1.5 grams dietary fiber

Ingredients	Grams	Bakers percent
Whole spelt wheat flour	250	100
Diastatic Barley Malt	12.5	5
Olive oil (optional)	12.5	5
Salt	3.8	1.5
Water at 86°F (30°C)	162.5 – 187.5	65 - 75
Mature sourdough starter	25	10

[] Prepare a 15-inch (38 cm) perforated silicone coated non-stick steel baguette pan according to manufacturer's instructions. Cut a piece of baking parchment to line the baguette pan.

[] In main mixing bowl, mix whole wheat flour and malt.

[] Use a fork to finely work olive oil into the flour.

[] In a separate jug or bowl dissolve salt in water and add sourdough starter; mix well. Add this mixture to main mixing bowl. Begin with the lower amount of water for the dough. Dough should be stiff enough to shape, not too slack.

[] Mix until all the ingredients are evenly incorporated. Knead the formed dough for a few minutes.

[] Press the dough down into a bowl or box with lid and leave to ferment and rise at 86°F (30°C) for 5 hours. Dough should be puffy at the end of this time but may not rise to double the original volume.

[] Water moistened hands, a clean board and a dough scraper are all that you will need to handle the dough. Do not sprinkle flour.

Punch dough down on a smooth surface. Pre-shape dough by forming it into a long rectangle, with even thickness. Fold each side to meet in the center and press so making a square of dough. Roll it up tightly starting at the top and ending with seam side up. Cover with inverted bowl or moist cloth, seam side up. Rest the dough for 15-30 minutes at warm ambient temperature.



[] Using moistened fingertips, gently press the dough piece into a rectangle of even thickness, long side at top. Fold dough from the top, two thirds down and seal the dough edge with the side of your hand along the center. Fold the bottom up and over the fold. Seal the seam by pinching or with the heel of the hand. Roll and gently stretch until length is an even 14-inches (35 cm)



[] Transfer formed baguette to parchment paper lined, perforated baguette-pan seam side down. Make cuts in the top surface of the baguette if flour is strong. *One cut along the length of the loaf for a dough that tends to split during bake. Or with a medium strong flour, 4 cuts for a leaf pattern; note that each cut is approximately parallel with length of loaf and begins half-way along from previous cut.*



[] Allow to rise for 1 hour at 86°F (30°C) with steam or humidity. *During this final rise time, if steam or humidity is unavailable, cover with parchment paper and a moist cloth. Remove the cloth and paper cover before baking! Conveniently, this step can be managed in a home combi-oven and continuously combined with the next steam baking step in the same oven.*

[] Bake with 100% steam at 212°F (100°C) for 90 minutes. *When fully baked the bread should be springy to the touch.*

[] After baking allow the soft baguette to cool to room temperature on a rack, before slicing and serving. Store soft baguette, wrapped in fresh paper towels or clean cloth, in a closed container.

