

IRAQI TRADITIONAL BREAD

(Made by Umm Sadik)

1 Tbsp. yeast

½ Tbsp. salt

Warm water, as needed while at work

8 cups wheat flour (brown or white or a mixture of both)

Mix the yeast, salt, and a little warm water in a deep bowl, then add the flour and a small amount of warm water and start kneading with the hands. Add small amounts of water whenever needed, and continue kneading until the dough becomes soft, cohesive, and sticks to the hand. Shape the dough into a single mass, make holes in it with your finger, then cover it with warm water and let it sit for about 15 minutes.

Drain the excess water from the bowl and start kneading the dough again with your hands to increase its consistency and softness. Cover the bowl with a piece of cloth or nylon and leave it for 1½ hours or more. If the weather is cold, put a blanket over the dough so that it ferments faster.

After the dough rises, cut it into small balls, about the size of a fist, and place them on a tray sprinkled with flour. Leave them, uncovered, for 30 minutes or more, as they will double in size.

As the dough balls sit, prepare the tandoor oven for baking (the temperature should be very hot).* Flip each ball of dough with your hands** until it becomes round and thin. Then push each dough ball to the oven wall with enough force that it sticks. Bake until brown and toasty. Delicious.

* The traditional oven is made of clay, and a fire is lit inside it using wood, cardboard, or dry dung fuel. But a metal oven that operates on gas has become popular.

** The traditional method of rolling out the dough is by using hands only, much like hand-flipping a pizza. However, a special cloth rounded pillow can be used to make the dough ball papery and round as well as to facilitate placing it on the wall of the oven.

If you choose to make your own version of this recipe, make sure and tag @lacma in your post so we can reshare!