



# Bread Machine & Baking Videos with Ellen Hoffman

Advice, tips, tricks, etc. for Bread Machine

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**Number one rule is:** Read your instruction manual carefully and thoroughly and start your new bread making adventure by making recipes from the recipe book from the manufacturer. If you don't have this information for whatever reason, you can usually find these in PDF form online. I highly advise sticking to those recipes until you get a little experience under your belt. Those recipes were written to work specifically with your machine and should be successful. Always follow the instructions from your machine as far as the order ingredients go into the bread pan. If you have a rest or preheat cycle, for example, there's no need to melt or soften the butter.

**Before you make your first loaf:** I know that getting a bread machine makes it seem like you push one button and walk away until you get a loaf of bread about 4 hours later. It is, mostly, but you must learn to watch your dough when it's mixing. You may need to add either a little more flour, a tablespoon at a time, or more liquid a bit at a time. It's pretty easy to tell if it's too dry (the dough isn't coming together and looks dry) or too wet (too liquidy and sticky or puddling around the paddles) when it is mixing, it should feel tacky but not sticky. After you see a smooth dough ball, you can pretty much walk away.

Your bread machine might make a bread that tastes perfectly lovely but is sloped or uneven. Many people (like me) just use the dough cycle, shape and put in loaf pans, let dough rise, and bake in the oven. This way you are assured that your shape will be pretty and you control the color of the crust more closely.

1. Let the bread bake however it bakes, and don't worry about the holes made by the paddles.
2. Use the dough cycle and shape your bread, let it rise, and bake it.

**The bread is baked! Now what?!!!** When the bread is finished, turn off your bread machine and unplug it. Have a hot pad or trivet ready on your counter. Put on your oven mitts and pull the bread pan out of the bread machine. Carry it over to the trivet and put it down. Get out a cooling rack and put it next to the hot pad. Next, position your still oven gloved hands on the bread pan so that you can turn the bread pan upside down and shake the bread out. If it doesn't come out easily, get out a soft, straight spatula that won't scratch the nonstick surface, and gently loosen the bread around the edges. Let your bread cool for 2-3 hours before you



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slice it. (You can certainly sneak a piece or two off the end, but slicing a loaf of hot bread will not go well!)

**Powdered Milk:** Many people are confused about Milk powder: You can follow the recipe exactly as written with water and milk powder, but you do not have to buy milk powder if you have regular milk. Just use regular liquid milk in the same amount of water as the recipe calls for. In my baking I've used low-fat milk, whole milk, Lactose Free milk, and even Half and Half in my recipes and all work just fine. If you do not normally keep milk in the house, by all means grab some of that milk powder (dry milk, powdered milk) so that you're always equipped. One good reason for keeping powdered milk around is if you want to use the delay setting on your machine.

**Temperature of Ingredients:** If you have a bread machine with a rest/preheat cycle at the beginning, you do not EVER need to heat up your water, or let any of your cold ingredients like milk, eggs, butter, sour cream, etc. sit out to come to room temp. Your bread machine does that for you. \* You do not EVER EVER need to proof your yeast ahead of time, unless it is to determine if it is still active. Keep your yeast in the freezer! Even if the recipe calls for warm water, melted butter, etc., you do not have to do this with the preheat/rest cycle.

**Speaking of yeast:** I used to use bread machine yeast or active dry yeast. I had many failures. As soon as I began using SAF Instant yeast, I've had 100% success!

**Liquids:** You should be able to substitute different liquids for water or milk, but please understand that it will always be an experiment at first.

**A note about oil:** I use Grapeseed oil in everything except recipes calling specifically for olive oil. Grapeseed oil is a neutral oil.

**A note about butter:** In the United States, I was raised to use regular, salted butter if the recipe called for butter and unsalted only if specified. If the recipe calls for unsalted, I use unsalted. This is a hot debate! A representative on the King Arthur baking hotline said they always use unsalted butter so they have control of the salt. Do what you feel is right. If the recipe calls for unsalted and you only have salted, take a tiny pinch of salt out of the amount of salt called for. If it calls for salted butter and you only have unsalted butter, just add a pinch



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more salt! You can't mess too much with the salt. The Sugar helps the yeast bloom and the salt keeps it from over-blooming. If you are going to do a lot of bread baking, I suggest you keep both unsalted and salted butter on hand at all times.

**And sugar...so much talk about sugar:** Some people prefer to use granulated, some honey, some brown sugar, some agave, some maple syrup, some molasses. I always use whatever is called for in the recipe. If you want to play with sugar, look up the amount exchanges. The most important thing about sugar is that it helps activate the yeast.

**Measuring and weighing:** If you prefer the measuring method, especially with flour, you must fluff/aerate your flour before measuring it. Hold the measuring cup just above the canister, and sprinkle the flour with the scoop or spoon from a few inches above. Sprinkle to overflowing, then level off with a straight edge spatula. NEVER EVER EVER EVER scoop your flour with your measuring cup. Scooping compacts the flour and it will be too much flour. (This is true of all baking, not just bread baking!)

I much prefer weighing my ingredients in grams to measuring. It's easier, quicker, and you will probably be closer to getting a perfect bread. Get yourself a scale. My scale cost a whole \$16-not a pricey purchase at all! In the US, recipes are never in grams so I measure once, weigh carefully, note the grams, and then I have it from that time on. I am slowly converting all my old family recipes to grams! It is just so much faster, easier, and exacting!

## **How I convert measuring cups/spoons to grams.**

I have my scale ready with a mixing bowl, ramekins, custard cups, etc. depending on the ingredient. For liquids I use a Pyrex measuring cup, but only because it has a pouring spout. I use the little bowls or custard cups for the sugar, salt, and yeast. I measure my milk, water, etc. extremely carefully into a glass or cup. I have another empty liquid measuring cup on the scale, set to grams and tared (zeroed) out. I pour the measured amount into the cup on the scale, look at the grams, and note them on the recipe. For flour, I measure carefully into measuring cups, making sure I've fluffed the flour well. I put an empty mixing bowl on my scale, zero it out, and carefully pour the measured flour into the mixing bowl. I note the grams on



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the recipe. I do this for every ingredient—even the tiny teaspoons of salt or yeast! For those I use little Pyrex custard cups or silicone cupcake liners.

Once you've converted your recipe to grams, getting your ingredients into the bread pan and pressing start takes way less time! You just put the empty cup for liquids on the scale, grab anything empty to put the water in, (or milk straight from the carton) and pour until the right number of grams has been reached.

**How to fill your bread pan:** I can only speak for my own machines. I have three Zojirushi Virtuoso Plus machines. My instructions say to put liquids first. The recipes that came with my machine provided the guidelines that I then apply to other recipes.

1. Liquids or liquid like things like sour cream, eggs, and oil
2. My flour routine is that I sprinkle the flour evenly in so that it covers all of the liquids.
3. Dry Milk. I would put that on one side in the flour.
4. Sugar (I have created a routine of putting the sugar on the right short side of the breadpan. If I get distracted, I always know if I put the sugar in or not.)
5. Salt (I put this on the left short side. If I get distracted, I can see if I put the salt in or not)
6. Butter: I don't cut it up if it's only a couple of tablespoons, but if it's half a stick or more, I slice it up a bit and I put it along the long sides, leaving the middle of the flour completely free of anything but flour.
7. Yeast: I take a spoon handle and make a little well in the flour right in the middle, then I weigh my yeast and put it right in that well. This is so important: The yeast should never touch any ingredients but the flour before you start your machine. (This may differ depending on your machine.)

**A word about washing and putting your paddles back into your bread pan.**

*Well, more than a word!*

NEVER put your bread pan into the dishwasher unless your instruction book says you can, which I truly doubt! I used to immerse my whole bread pan and eventually my bearings froze and I had to get a new machine. Now I'm obsessively careful. The bottom part of the bread pan where the screws are should never get wet!



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First, I wash my paddles. I wash the outsides with a soft sponge, and then use a drinking straw brush to clean the holes. I have a kitchen towel all set up on my island that is right across from my sink. I put the paddles on the towel, then wash the bread pan. I rest the bread pan on one side of the middle part of my sink supported by my left hand as I wash the inside and handles with a soft sponge in my right hand. I rinse, flip it to the other side, and make sure I've gotten it clean. I try very hard to not even get water on the sides unless the sides got dirty, then I'm extremely careful. When it's all clean and rinsed, I put the bread pan upside down on the towel with the paddles. I make sure every bit is dried with a thin dish towel or a paper towel. Then I flip it over, dry the inside of the bread pan, and immediately put my paddles back in. (Many people have put ingredients in their bread pan, put it in the machine and pressed start and realized the paddles weren't in the pan!) Please learn from the mistakes of others and put your paddles back in immediately! I've heard of paddles being lost, wrecked in the disposal, and thrown in the trash. Because I don't want any dampness in my machine, I let the bread pan sit out for at least 12 hours before storing it back in the machine. I don't know if my instructions say to be as careful as I am, but when I called Zojirushi (my machines are all Zojirushis) I told them I wash it like that and the customer service rep told me my machine will last forever if I'm careful like that.

**About Add/Mix in ingredients like raisins, nuts, etc.:** My machines beep when it is time to add big chunks like raisins, large seeds like pumpkin seeds, chocolate chips, or nuts. I sprinkle them in gradually, allowing a bit of mixing in between. With tiny seeds like chia or caraway, you can just put them in at the beginning. Don't put more than about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup into a two-pound loaf.

**Dough Cycle:** If you want to make things like cinnamon rolls, dinner rolls, or just to bake your loaves of bread in the oven, you need to set your machine to dough cycle. In basic terms, you add the ingredients as usual, but choose dough course. When you take the dough out, you just shape it into a loaf to put in loaf pan, make rolls, or whatever. You let it rise one more time for about 45 minutes, and then you bake it. Simple once you know how!

Ellen Hoffman (January 2021)