

## Wholemeal Soda Bread

This is a classic quick bread with simple ingredients. It is good with a hearty winter soup; or serve at a picnic spread with pure creamy butter and topped with ham, summer vegetables and your favourite chutney. You can also add ingredients such as sundried tomatoes, mixed herbs, olives or walnuts to create your own special soda bread. Best eaten within a day of baking.

MAKES 1 LOAF

250g (1⅓ cups) plain white  
(all-purpose) flour  
250g (1½ cups) wholemeal or  
whole wheat flour  
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda  
(baking soda)  
1 tsp salt  
400ml (1⅓ cups) buttermilk

Place dry ingredients in a large mixing bowl and mix well to combine. If you are adding other ingredients (see variations below), add at this stage. Stir in buttermilk and mix to form a rough, sticky dough ball. Don't over-mix dough at this stage as it will make the soda bread tough.

Tip dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and shape into a ball or cob shape. Flatten it slightly with the palm of your hand. Transfer to a baking tray (cookie sheet) lined with baking (parchment) paper. Using a large chef's knife or dough scraper, cut a deep cross three-quarters of the way through the dough ball. Dust with flour and leave to rest for 10 minutes.

Place tray (sheet) in a preheated 210°C/410°F/Gas 6½ oven. Bake for approximately 30 minutes, or until bottom of loaf sounds hollow when tapped with your knuckles. Remove from oven and place on a wire rack to cool.

**VARIATIONS:** Make your own buttermilk by mixing to combine 200g (scant 1 cup) natural yoghurt, 200ml (scant 1 cup) whole milk and a squeeze of lemon juice.

Vary the soda bread by adding your choice of grated Cheddar, olives, sundried tomatoes, herbs, dried fruits or nuts just before mixing in the buttermilk.