Irish Soda Bread

Soda bread is a type of quick bread where baking soda is used as a leavening agent instead of the traditional yeast. American settlers used soda or pearl ash, more commonly known as potash (pot ash) or potassium carbonate, as a leavening agent (the forerunner to baking soda) in quick breads. After baking soda was developed in the US in 1846, breads, griddle cakes and scones with bicarbonate of soda, plus cream of tartar or tartaric acid, became popular in both America and European countries.

The ingredients of traditional soda bread are flour, baking soda, salt, and buttermilk. The buttermilk in the dough contains lactic acid, which reacts with the baking soda to form tiny bubbles of carbon dioxide. Other ingredients can be added, such as butter, egg, raisins, or nuts, but these ingredients are not as traditional.

Ingredients

3 ½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour
¾ teaspoon salt
¾ teaspoon baking soda
1 ½ cups buttermilk

Cooking Utensils

Measuring cup
Measuring spoons
Large mixing bowl
Whisk
Wooden spoon
Sharp knife
Parchment paper
Baking sheet
Wire rack

Preheat oven to 450°. Line the baking sheet with the parchment paper. In the large mixing bowl, place the flour, salt, and baking soda. Whisk together until well mixed. Use a wooden spoon to create a well in the center of the dry ingredients and add the buttermilk into the "well." With the wooden spoon, gently stir the ingredients together, starting at the center of the bowl and slowly working outward. The dough will be very shaggy.

Sprinkle some flour onto a work surface and pour the dough out onto it. Use your hands to gently knead the dough about 4 times, until it comes together, and the surface is slightly smoother. Using the palms of your hands, shape the dough into a round loaf.

Place the loaf onto the parchment lined baking sheet and sprinkle the top with some flour. Using a sharp knife cut a large X into the top of the loaf.

Place the baking sheet into the oven and bake for 15 minutes at 450° F. Lower the temperature to 400° F, rotate the pan 180 degrees in the oven, and bake for another 25-30 minutes until the loaf is deeply golden brown. Remove the bread from the oven and place it on a wire rack. Allow the bread to cool for at least 20minutes before serving.