

Hearth Bread : A Conjectural Adaptation

Bake ovens could be a luxury item in some cultures or in most camps. Hearth breads could be cooked on a hot stone covered by a dish or a pot. By using a cast iron skillet or flat bottomed dutch oven on your camp stove, with a lid, you can simulate the hot stone on the hearth.

4 cups whole wheat flour
1 1/3 cups water
1 T yeast or 2 packets yeast
1 T honey
1 1/2 t salt
1/4 c olive oil

- 1) Heat the water to 110-120 degrees F. in a 16 oz or larger cup or bowl. Add the yeast, stir well and let the yeasties grow for ten minutes or until a foam has been produced on top of the liquid.
- 2) In a larger bowl combine 3 cups of flour and the salt. When the yeast has proofed, add it to the bowl with flour, along with the honey and the olive oil. Now stir well until all the flour is absorbed. If you are able, keep beating the batter for 5 to 10 minutes until strands of dough are formed. Then knead in more flour by the quarter to half cup until the fourth cup of flour is absorbed. When the dough is smooth and satiny, cover the bowl with a damp towel and let the dough rest for 20 minutes.
- 3) After the dough has relaxed break off a piece about the size of a dinner roll and begin to shape it into a flat round about 8 inches in diameter or the size to fit into your cast iron skillet. Dip your hands in flour as needed if the dough is sticky. Roll out to 1/4" thickness. Put the round of dough on a cookie sheet or a dampened tea towel to rise for 20 minutes. Continue shaping rounds with the rest of the dough and set them aside to rise covered with another dampened tea towel. Risen rounds should be one half to three quarters inch thick.
- 4) Preheat your cast iron skillet to a medium to medium-low heat (Water should sizzle away quickly.) Gently slide one of the rounds that has risen into the skillet. Check after 1-2 minutes that the bottom is not burnt. Flip the round over with a pancake turner. Cook until done, with dough dry, brown patches on both sides. Some of the rounds will puff into large bubbles and create a pocket inside.

Optional: Roll or pat out a circle of the dough to the thickness of a pizza crust, about 1/4 inch thick, fill with precooked onions and sausage, mozzarella cheese and herbs, fold in half, seal the edges, let rise for 20 minutes and cook for a calzone. This method also works for a meat pie with a filling of precooked ground beef, raisins, breadcrumbs, wine and spices according to your favorite period recipe. This dough is also good kid food when made a little thicker, stuffed with cheese, cooked and served only warm. Cook this covered, at a lower heat.