

Soft Large Sandwich Buns

Hearty full size sandwich buns are four and a half inches in diameter (11.4 cm). For the very soft texture they are steam-baked either free form on a baking sheet or trained to size in a silicone non-stick steel bun-pan in a combi-oven. Alternatively, these buns can be steam-baked for the same length of time in a stove top steamer.

The dough in this version is made simply with spelt and malt flour, salt, the requisite amount of water, a mature malt-sourdough leavening and optionally with some olive oil.

Spelt is historically the grain of German speaking people in Central and Eastern Europe where it appears to have had its origin much later than the other hulled wheats, einkorn, or emmer. In Germany, the proportion of winter spelt versus winter bread wheat grown has likely fallen from a much higher level before the invention of refined flour milling in the late 1800s. The explanation is that spelt is a very soft grain and does not mill as efficiently to refined flour as hard red winter wheat in the roller milling system. However, winter spelt has the advantage that it can withstand extra cold winters better than most hard red winter wheat varieties. Rye is similarly soft and is a very hardy grain to grow compared with bread wheat; it is still grown in Germany in amounts greater than for spelt. All of which is to say that large sandwich buns in Germany might previously have been made with a mix of spelt and rye flours¹. *Whole grain flour from the various red and white wheat types and from durum wheat could be used instead of spelt in this recipe.*

Note also that spring types of spelt originating in Northern Spain, in Asturias, have a long tradition in agriculture and bread. The ancient spelt variety *Asturien* has been honored in the *Slow Food Arc of Taste*. Both winter and spring types of spelt are available in North America.

Please note that the mature malt sourdough starter used in this recipe is always matured until there is no further gaseous fermentation and the acidity is at a maximum. In this way, only the most acid tolerant of yeast varieties are consistently present in saturation quantities. Other starters not brought to maturity in this way, may not give satisfactory results. It is also important when using large amounts of enzyme active malt in a dough, to allow a total fermentation time that is sufficiently long for enough acidity to develop to counteract the effects of the malt enzymes before baking. A recipe for this type of malt sourdough starter can be found at www.wholegrainconnection.org. The direct link is:

<http://www.wholegrainconnection.org/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/3simplemaltsourdoughstarter.pdf>

*Amounts are for 4 large sandwich buns, diameter 4.5 inches (11.4 cm)
Each bun contains 68 grams whole grain and 6 grams dietary fiber*

¹ *According to the European Flour Millers' Manual on the European Flour Milling Industry, there were 185 mills in Germany in 2021. They produce just under 6 million tonnes of flour (wheat equivalent), some 242,000 tonnes of spelt flour and around 588,000 tonnes of rye flour. (10/24/2022 at www.worldgrain.com)*

| <i>Ingredients</i> | <i>Grams</i> | <i>Bakers percent</i> |
|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Whole spelt wheat flour | 250 | 100 |
| Diastatic Barley Malt | 12.5 | 5 |
| Olive oil (optional) | 12.5 | 5 |
| Fine Salt | 3.8 | 1.5 |
| Water at 86°F (30°C) | 162.5 – 187.5 | 65 - 75 |
| Mature sourdough starter* | 25 | 10 |

* See above note about the malt sourdough starter.

[] For steaming in a combi-oven, prepare a perforated silicone coated non-stick steel bun pan according to manufacturer's instructions. Alternatively, line bun pans with 6-inch (15 cm) parchment baking paper squares.

If bun pan is unavailable prepare 4.5-inch parchment baking paper squares (12cm) on which to place buns for final rise and steaming on a perforated or plain baking sheet.

Another option is to use a silicone baking mat on a plain or perforated baking sheet for free-form buns.

[] In main mixing bowl, mix whole wheat flour, and malt.

[] Use a fork to finely work olive oil into the flour.

[] In a separate jug or bowl dissolve salt in water. Add sourdough starter and mix well; add this mixture to main mixing bowl. *Begin with the lower amount of water for the dough.*

[] Mix until all the ingredients are evenly incorporated. Knead the formed dough for a few minutes until a smooth dough ball forms. *Dough should be somewhat stiff.*

[] Press the dough down into a bowl or box with lid and leave to ferment and rise at 86°F (30°C) for 5 hours. *Dough should be puffy at the end of this time but may not rise to double the original volume. Alternatively leave at 68°F (20°C) for 10-12 hours.*

[] *Water moistened hands, a clean board and a dough scraper are all that you will need to handle the dough. Do not sprinkle flour.*

Punch dough down on a smooth surface. Knead briefly. Form a symmetrical dough ball. Divide the dough ball into four equal weight portions with a dough scraper. Form each portion into a ball. Cover with inverted bowl or moist cloth. Rest the dough for 15-30 minutes at warm ambient temperature.

[] Place dough balls on prepared bun pan, parchment paper or baking mat on baking sheet. Using moistened fingertips, gently press each dough ball into a disk

approximately a half inch thick (1cm) and diameter a little less than four and a half inches (< 11 cm).

[] Allow to rise for 1 hour at 86°F (30°C) with steam or humidity. *During this final rise time, if steam or humidity is unavailable, cover with parchment paper and a moist cloth. Remove the cloth and paper cover before baking! Conveniently, this step can be managed in a home combi-oven and continuously combined with the next steam baking step in the same oven.*

[] Bake with 100% steam at 212°F (100°C) for one hour. *When fully baked the buns should be springy to the touch.*



[] After baking allow the soft buns to cool to room temperature on a rack, before slicing and serving. Store soft buns, wrapped in clean cloth or fresh paper towels, in a closed container.