

Great Breads

Martha Rose Shulman

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Martha Rose Shulman : Great Breads before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Great Breads:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. BreadBy Melanie LeMasterI love this book, and I shared it with my daughter. It has a great selection of healthy bread recipes.2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Tutorial Bread BookBy Judi TThis is more of an instructional book and a slow read but once you get your mind set, read the recipes and skip most of the other, it has some excellent recipes and suggestions. There are some great references for products. More for the advanced baker.14 of 21 people found the following review helpful. Mediocre British BreadBy jerry i hThere are many very good bread books available these days; unfortunately, this book is not one of them. My main objection is the over use of whole grains, as they produce textures that are coarse, dry, and heavy. If you are interested in whole-grain breads, this book is a treasure trove of hard to find recipes. I was more impressed with the quantity than the quality of the bread recipes. Some worked better than others, but I was not overly crazy about any of the breads I made from this book. There is a serious problem with the measurement of flour. It calls for stir and scoop method of flour measurement. The appendix lists the weight of one cup of flour as 5 ounces; when I did it, I got exactly 4 ounces. So, I am unsure exactly how much flour to use in the recipes, and weighing the flour (the usual professional solution) is of no help here. Plus, the author prefers wet doughs with a high hydration level (a method popularized by Poilane, who appears in the introduction of the book); this does produce lighter, airier bread, but it is significantly more difficult for the beginner to do than a dough with a standard hydration. If you do want to try these recipes, I suggest you use more flour (try 20% to begin with) than listed to get a firmer dough; kneading will be much

easier. It is also unclear what the author means by "unbleached white flour": is it all-purpose flour or bread flour? Based on the ingredient balance in the whole grains chapter, I am assuming it is the latter. I used bread flour throughout, but still often got dense, under-developed doughs that will not window-pane correctly, telling me that the author might have been using a special, high gluten wheat flour. In order for the whole wheat bread recipes to work, you must use whole wheat bread flour, even though the author does not specify as such. I would also ignore the author's instructions to add flour to the liquid a little at a time; for a beginner, it would be better to simply use all the flour and liquid at once in the beginning. Many recipes have instructions for both hand kneading and mixer. The first chapter has a fairly good primer on the various aspects of bread: dough, risings, baking, etc. The main failing here is the author does a poor job of describing when a dough has been properly proofed. Too often, the author gives a time specification (which will probably not be correct, depending on how warm the weather is) along with the standard "until doubled" (with an oval or round loaf, how are you supposed to determine this? Just by looking at it?). The chapter on whole grain breads produced heavy, dense, inedible loaves suitable only as construction material. Most of the recipes call for 3 risings, but some of them will not rise the third time. It often also calls for mixing in only part of the flour, fermenting that, then adding the rest of the flour; there was no apparent advantage to just adding all the flour at once (in fact, the author's 2 part mixing was more trouble and more time consuming with no apparent advantage). The British must have more tolerance for eating wood than Americans; from this intriguing chapter, I found only the Baps to be edible. The recipes for Indian breads were very good. The chapter on sourdough gets applause for a good try, but it has too many questions to be recommendable. Sourdough does not "spread out quickly" when turned out of a banneton. I also object to the suggestion that levain or doughs be left out at room temperature for 12 hours or more. This might be OK in Britain where it is cool, but in the U.S., especially in summer, the yeast will die off if you do because it is too warm; after a few hours at a warm room temperature, they should be put in the refrigerator overnight. Only one recipe, Pain de Campagne, uses only sourdough levain; all the others use commercial yeast in addition. This is a good convenience, but you will not get much sourdough taste if you do, and the author does not have conversion instructions if you do want use all levain. Also, the doughs call for far too much whole grains; I find that at most you can add 10% whole grains to a sourdough before you get something like a boat anchor (it seems that I can use kamut and spelt up to 20%). On the good side, the recipes seem to be based on actual experience rather than myth and rumor about sourdough (which is more common in baking books than you might suspect). She also has instructions, albeit brief ones, for both sourdough levain and Italian biga. The chapters on savory and sweet breads were mostly recreations of the sort of breads you get at a traditional English high tea. The rather light breads you would normally expect from these chapters used far too much rye, whole wheat, durum, etc. "Fruit-Filled Bread" is described as "pleasantly heavy" (come again?). The chapter on crackers had several valuable recipes, although I had to increase the baking temperature to get the correct, crunchy texture. I had difficulty getting anything edible from the 2 chapters on quick breads, although there were several good scone recipes. The last 2 chapters have recipes for stale breads, and some interesting troubleshooting information.

With clear step-by-step directions and illustrations, Shulman shares secrets learned from bakers in Europe, Britain, and North America—more than 175 recipes in all.

"Clearly written sections . . . that take the worry out of breadmaking, even for beginners." (Cooking Light) About the Author Martha Rose Shulman is America's foremost authority on good-tasting, healthful food. She has written many award-winning books, including the best-selling Mediterranean Light and Provençal Light. She is a contributing editor to Health and writes regularly for the nation's leading food and health magazines.