

SEPTEMBER

Better Baking Academy: Classic English Muffins

In this month's module of the Better Baking Academy with Bob's Red Mill, we show you how to achieve perfectly light and chewy English muffins. Starting with a high-hydration ratio, our dough relies on the high protein content of Bob's Red Mill Artisan Bread Flour to develop a strong gluten network, ultimately helping you get those signature nooks and crannies. Then, to attain the best flavor and an extra-craggy interior texture, we allow the dough to rest overnight in the refrigerator. From there, we take you step-by-step through the shaping technique, one final rise, and, finally, cooking methods. Using an electric griddle, we demonstrate how to achieve that perfectly crisp and golden exterior and light, airy interior. [Click here for the printable PDF version of the module!](#)



INGREDIENT BREAKDOWN

Great recipes require great ingredients. Here's how each of our recipe's simple ingredients contributes to making the best of the breakfast breads, the English muffin.

BOB'S RED MILL BREAD FLOUR: The distinctive chew and texture of English muffins calls for a high-protein flour. Bob's Red Mill Artisan Bread Flour offers plenty of protein to create a tight network of gluten and provides the sturdy structure necessary to create and hold all the signature air bubbles found inside an English muffin.

KOSHER SALT: As a rule of thumb, the ratio of salt to flour in breads is 1.8% to 2% of flour weight. It's important to weigh your salt because different salt crystals measure differently. Dough without enough salt easily overferments. Salt also helps with crust color and enhances flavor.

ACTIVE DRY YEAST: Yeast are small, single-celled organisms that feed on simple sugars, breaking them down into carbon dioxide, alcohol, flavor molecules, and energy. This process is referred to as fermentation. With this dough, the yeast is given a long fermentation period in a cold environment to allow for greater development of flavor compounds as well production of carbon dioxide. This production of carbon dioxide makes yeast the main leavening agent in this recipe.

GRANULATED SUGAR: The sugar we use in this recipe has little to do with sweetening the dough. Instead, it acts as an aid to the yeast in creating greater amounts of carbon dioxide in the fermentation process. This ultimately helps to tenderize the dough, creating soft, pliable English muffins.

WATER: Moisture, in the form of warm water, is needed to activate the yeast and hydrate the dough so the gluten can develop. Because the structure of English muffins is so delicate, this dough relies on a higher hydration level to allow for optimum development of air pockets. This high hydration not only helps to build elasticity but also, when cooking, the water is converted to steam, which helps leaven the dough and prevents the crust from forming too quickly and burning.

NEUTRAL OIL: The addition of oil slightly enriches the dough with fat while also helping to make the dough more elastic. A more elastic dough means greater ease in stretching and shaping your English muffins. Ultimately, the additional moisture provided by the oil also helps to provide a moist crumb.

BOB'S RED MILL SEMOLINA FLOUR:

Rather than going in the dough, Bob's Red Mill Semolina Flour is used for dusting the outside of our English muffins. Why? When breads are cooked on a griddle or stovetop, the bottoms can scorch and stick. A protective barrier of semolina flour or cornmeal helps protect your English muffins from this avoidable error. Also, if using English muffin rings, semolina flour will help keep your dough from sticking when it comes time to remove the rings. We prefer semolina flour over cornmeal for its finer texture; it allows the crunch to come from the crust of the English muffin, not the cornmeal.



A top-down view of a breakfast table. In the center, a glass dish holds several pats of butter with a butter knife. To the right, a white plate holds two golden-brown English muffins. Below that, a white cup is filled with coffee. In the foreground, a silver plate holds two English muffins, one with a generous spread of red jam, and a spoon with more jam. To the left, another white plate has a single English muffin with a fried egg on top. A small glass jar of orange jam sits in the upper middle. A wooden honey dipper with a slice of lemon is on the left. At the bottom, a jar of honey and a small bowl of jam are visible. The background is a light-colored, textured surface.

CLASSIC
ENGLISH MUFFINS

CLASSIC ENGLISH MUFFINS

Makes 12 English muffins

Whether dressed simply with butter and jam or topped with Canadian bacon, poached eggs, and hollandaise for the ultimate eggs Benedict, these English muffins are sure to become a new breakfast staple. With the English muffins' crisp, perfectly golden crusts and tender, light centers, other breakfast breads simply can't compete. Just beware, it's best practice to pry the bread apart with a fork in order to preserve the nooks and crannies of your freshly made English muffins. Once toasted, every pocket and peak becomes a vessel for pools of butter, honey, and any other scrumptious topping you can dream up.

- 4 cups (508 grams) Bob's Red Mill Artisan Bread Flour
- 3¼ teaspoons (10 grams) kosher salt
- 2½ teaspoons (7 grams) active dry yeast
- 1 teaspoon (4 grams) granulated sugar
- 1¾ cups (420 grams) lukewarm water (85°F/29°C to 90°F/32°C)
- 1 teaspoon (5 grams) neutral oil
- Bob's Red Mill Semolina Flour, for dusting

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer, whisk together bread flour, salt, yeast, and sugar. Add 1¾ cups (420 grams) lukewarm water and oil. Using the dough hook attachment, beat at medium-low speed until ingredients come together, 1 to 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. (Mixture will be shaggy, but no dry bits of flour should remain). Increase mixer speed to medium, and beat until dough is shiny, smooth, and elastic (does not tear when pulled), pulls away from sides of bowl completely, and forms a ball around dough hook.

2. Spray a medium bowl with cooking spray. Place dough in bowl. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

3. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Dust with semolina flour. If using English muffin rings, spray with cooking spray. Place semolina flour on a plate, and coat rings with semolina flour by rotating rings in a quick circular motion on plate.

4. On a lightly floured surface, turn out dough, and lightly press with fingertips until even. Divide dough into 12 portions (about 78 grams each). Place on a lightly floured surface, and using floured hands, press with your fingertips to an even thickness. Starting at one point on outside edge, pull (or fold) edge toward center, and lightly press to seal. Continue clockwise around edge until you reach original starting point. Turn seam side down, and using your hands, pull dough across lightly floured surface until smooth and round and holds its shape. Repeat with remaining dough, and place at least 3 inches apart on prepared pans. Place prepared rings around dough, if using. Sprinkle tops of dough with semolina flour. Cover loosely with plastic wrap, and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until puffed and dough jiggles slightly when pan is moved, about 1 hour. (If not using rings, it is important to spray the plastic wrap with cooking spray before covering.)

5. Preheat electric griddle to 350°F (180°C), or preheat a cast-iron griddle pan to medium heat. (See Note.) Lightly spray griddle with cooking spray. Using 2 greased spatulas, gently move dough (and rings) to preheated surface, placing at least ½ inches apart. Cook until bottoms are golden brown and tops are puffed and look dry/matte, about 8 minutes for electric griddle or about 5 minutes for cast-iron griddle. Turn English muffins, and remove rings, if using; cook until bottoms are golden brown and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 205°F (96°C) to 210°F (99°C), about 8 minutes for electric griddle or about 5 minutes for cast-iron griddle. If English muffins register below 205°F (96°C), turn back over, and cook until done, 1 to 3 minutes. Place on a wire rack. Wipe griddle surface clean, and spray with cooking spray before cooking next batch. Let English muffins cool completely before splitting with a fork. Serve toasted and warm.

Note: A cast-iron skillet can be used, but the sides make it harder to turn the English muffins over. A 12-inch skillet would be recommended and only 2 English muffins cooked at a time.



MIXER MAGIC

How to mix the perfect English muffin dough



1. In the bowl of a stand mixer, whisk together bread flour, salt, yeast, and sugar. Add $1\frac{3}{4}$ cups (420 grams) water and oil. Using the dough hook attachment, beat at medium-low speed until ingredients come together, 1 to 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. (Mixture will be shaggy, but no dry bits of flour should remain). At this point, you should resist the urge to add more flour. The high hydration of this dough is what allows for all those nooks and crannies to form, and adding more flour will make the final product too dense.



2. Increase mixer speed to medium, and beat until dough is shiny, smooth, and elastic (does not tear when pulled), pulls away from sides of bowl completely, and forms a ball around dough hook.

MIXER MAGIC



3. Spray a medium bowl with cooking spray. Place dough in bowl. Cover and refrigerate overnight. This step is key to properly hydrating the flour in your dough; properly hydrated flour is your greatest defense against a gummy or wet final product. After an overnight ferment, the flavor of your dough will also vastly improve, with the yeast slowly consuming sugar and generating its two essential byproducts: bubbly carbon dioxide (which affects the rise of your dough) and tangy alcohol (which affects the flavor). Not to mention, the colder your dough is, the easier it'll be to work with and shape the next morning.

SHAPING YOUR WAY TO SUCCESS

Whether you decide to use English muffin rings or not, we'll show you how to properly portion and shape your dough for uniformly round English muffins



1. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper. Dust with semolina flour. If using English muffin rings, spray with cooking spray. Place semolina flour on a plate, and coat rings with semolina flour by rotating rings in a quick circular motion on plate.

SHAPING YOUR WAY TO SUCCESS



2. On a lightly floured surface, turn out dough, and lightly press with fingertips until even. Divide dough into 12 portions (about 78 grams each). Place on a lightly floured surface, and using floured hands, press with your fingertips to an even thickness.

SHAPING YOUR WAY TO SUCCESS



3. Starting at one point on outside edge, pull (or fold) edge toward center, and lightly press to seal. Continue clockwise around edge until you reach original starting point. Turn seam side down, and using your hands, pull dough across lightly floured surface until smooth and round and holds its shape. Repeat with remaining dough, and place at least 3 inches apart on prepared pans. Place prepared rings around dough, if using. Sprinkle tops of dough with semolina flour. Cover loosely with plastic wrap, and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until puffed and dough jiggles slightly when pan is moved, about 1 hour. (If not using rings, it is important to spray the plastic wrap with cooking spray before covering.)

HOT OFF THE GRIDDLE

Here's exactly what you should look for as you're cooking your English muffins



1. Preheat electric griddle to 350°F (180°C), or preheat a cast-iron griddle pan to medium heat. Lightly spray griddle with cooking spray. A cast-iron skillet can be used, but the sides make it harder to turn the English muffins over. For this recipe, a 12-inch skillet would be recommended and only two English muffins cooked at a time.
2. Using 2 greased spatulas, gently move dough (and rings) to preheated surface, placing at least 1½ inches apart. Cook until bottoms are golden brown and tops are puffed and look dry/matte, about 8 minutes for electric griddle or about 5 minutes for cast-iron griddle.



3. Turn English muffins, and remove rings, if using; cook until bottoms are golden brown and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 205°F (96°C) to 210°F (99°C), about 8 minutes for electric griddle or about 5 minutes for cast-iron griddle. If English muffins register below 205°F (96°C), turn back over, and cook until done, 1 to 3 minutes. Place on a wire rack. Wipe griddle surface clean, and spray with cooking spray before cooking next batch. Let English muffins cool completely before splitting with a fork. Serve toasted and warm.

THE ENGLISH MUFFIN VS. THE CRUMPET

The English muffin, first called a “toaster crumpet,” was introduced in the US in the 1880s by Samuel Bath Thomas, a British immigrant to New York City. Quickly embraced as a more elegant alternative to toast, English muffins were served at fine hotels and restaurants and soon became a mainstay of American breakfast cuisine. But what’s the difference between crumpets and English muffins? Crumpets are moist and squishy, closer in texture to a pancake. A combination of yeast and baking powder or baking soda is used in the batter to generate air pockets on top, and spreads are smeared directly onto its cratered exterior. English muffins, on the other hand, are both flatter and drier than crumpets and closer in texture to bread. And, unlike the crumpet, the holes of an English muffin are located inside rather than on top. Thus, when the English muffin is split in two, you get two halves with those famous nooks and crannies.

