

HOMESTEADWIFELIFE

HWL Kitchen Ledger Collection

# **Bread Baking 206**

## **Fresh-Milled English Muffins**

### **The Freezer Batch**

Soft, griddled bread with 40% fresh-milled whole grain, a gentle overnight schedule, and real nooks and crannies.

A Homestead Wife Life teaching ledger

Homestead Wife Life · Bread Baking 206

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## Fresh-Milled English Muffins

English muffins live at the wet end of the bread dough spectrum, and that wetness is the whole secret. The nooks and crannies everyone chases are big gas bubbles, and only a slack, well-hydrated dough can hold them.

No oven for this one, just a griddle, low and patient. This batch uses 40% fresh-milled whole grain, with milk and honey keeping it mild, faintly sweet, and friendly enough for the whole table.

### What this lesson teaches

- How a wet bread dough behaves differently from a firm dough.
- Why fresh-milled flour needs a rest before you judge the texture.
- How to build strength gently with stretch-and-folds instead of aggressive kneading.
- Why griddle temperature matters more than speed.
- Why English muffins should be fork-split, not cut with a knife.

#### Kitchen note: the secret

Do not fix this dough with extra flour. It should be slack, sticky, and almost batter-like at first. That wetness is where the crannies begin.

#### Kitchen note: the schedule

The overnight rest is not just for flavor. It makes a very wet dough cold, firm, and workable the next morning.

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### WHAT THIS PAGE IS REALLY ABOUT

This is the wet dough lesson. Once you understand that the stickiness is useful, English muffins stop feeling fussy and start feeling practical.

# The Blend, Written in Roles

Role	What It Does	This Recipe Uses	Safe Swaps
The Backbone (60%)	Structure to hold the open crumb without toughness.	420g bread flour	High-protein AP works fine here.
The Body (25%)	Golden color, gentle sweetness, and quiet nutrition.	175g Kamut, fresh milled	Any hard white wheat, Glenn, or hard spring.
The Character Note (15%)	Mild wheat depth without taking over.	105g hard white wheat, fresh milled	Any white wheat, or fold into the body.

Same mild rule as always: white wheats and Kamut keep these kid-friendly. Red wheats swap in 1:1 whenever the table is ready for deeper flavor.

## Ingredients | Makes 12 muffins

Ingredients	Tools
• 420g bread flour	• Grain mill
• 175g Kamut berries, milled fine	• Kitchen scale
• 105g hard white wheat berries, milled fine	• Large bowl
• 610g whole milk, warm, about 100°F	• Sturdy spoon or wet hand
• 35g butter, melted	• Parchment-lined sheet pan
• 21g honey	• Thin spatula
• 14g fine sea salt	• Cast iron skillet or griddle
• 5g instant yeast	• Instant-read thermometer
• Cornmeal or semolina, generous amount for dusting	• Cooling rack

### WHAT THIS PAGE IS REALLY ABOUT

The blend is not random. Bread flour carries the structure; fresh-milled grain brings flavor, color, and nutrition; the mild wheats keep the batch friendly for the whole table.

## Day One: Mix, Rest, and Build Strength

### Step 1: Mill the grain

Mill the Kamut and hard white wheat on your finest setting, right before mixing if you can. Weigh the berries before milling, then use all the flour they produce. If you prefer to weigh after milling, weigh the finished flour and adjust as needed.

### Step 2: Mix

Whisk the three flours and yeast together in a large bowl. Warm the milk, melt the butter into it, and stir in the honey. Pour the wet into the dry and mix with a sturdy spoon or your hand just until no dry flour remains.

#### Dough cue

This dough is slack, sticky, almost a thick batter that barely holds a shape. That is correct. Do not add flour. The wetness is where the crannies come from, and the fresh-milled bran will drink up some of it during the rest.

Cover and rest 20 minutes.

### Step 3: Add salt and fold

Sprinkle the salt over the dough and squeeze it through with a wet hand until incorporated. We hold the salt back for this short rest so the fresh flour can hydrate before the dough tightens.

Do three sets of stretch-and-folds: with a wet hand, grab one edge of the dough, stretch it up, and fold it over the center. Rotate the bowl and repeat four times. That is one set. Do one set every 30 minutes for the first 90 minutes of the rise, covering between sets.

### Stretch-and-fold timeline

Time	What to do	What you should notice
After the 20-minute rest	Add salt and complete Fold Set 1.	Dough still loose, but less shaggy.

Time	What to do	What you should notice
30 minutes later	Fold Set 2.	Dough begins smoothing out.
30 minutes later	Fold Set 3.	Dough should feel more elastic and alive.

**WHAT THIS PAGE IS REALLY ABOUT**

You are not kneading this dough into submission. You are building just enough strength to hold the bubbles without knocking the life out of it.

## Overnight Rest and Cold Shaping

### Step 4: Finish the bulk, then refrigerate

After the last fold, cover and let the dough finish rising at room temperature another 30 to 60 minutes, until visibly puffed and bubbly and increased by about half.

Then move it into the refrigerator, covered airtight, for 12 to 24 hours. The cold rest does three important jobs: deeper flavor, easier handling, and a schedule that splits the work into two short sessions.

**Kitchen note: cold dough**

This very wet dough is much easier to handle straight from the fridge. At room temperature, the same dough becomes a sticky fight.

### Step 5: Divide and shape, cold

Next morning, dust the counter generously with cornmeal and dust a parchment-lined sheet pan the same way. Turn the cold dough out. Handle it like it is full of something precious, because it is: those bubbles are the crannies.

Divide into 12 pieces, about 115g each. Shape each into a round with the lightest touch you own. Tuck the edges under to make a puck about 3 inches across. No tight rounding. No pressing. Set them on the dusted pan with space between, and dust the tops with more cornmeal.

### Step 6: Proof

Cover loosely and proof at room temperature 45 to 60 minutes, until puffy and pillowy, jiggling slightly when you nudge the pan. They should look like they would dent if you poked them.

**Underproofed muffins**

Come out dense and tight, even when the formula is right.

**Properly proofed muffins**

Rise tall on the griddle and give you the best chance at an open crumb.

**WHAT THIS PAGE IS REALLY ABOUT**

The refrigerator is your helper here. Cold dough lets you shape gently, and gentle shaping protects the bubbles you worked all night to build.

## Griddle, Cool, and Fork-Split

### Step 7: Griddle, low and patient

Heat a cast iron skillet or griddle over medium-low, about 300 to 325°F on the surface. No oil is needed on a seasoned pan; the cornmeal is the release.

Transfer muffins gently with a thin spatula, about 4 at a time, and do not crowd the pan. Cook 6 to 8 minutes per side. The first side is done when deeply golden, the muffin has visibly risen, and the sides look set halfway up.

Flip once, gently, and cook the second face the same way. Internal temperature should reach 200°F. If the faces are browning faster than the centers are cooking, your heat is too high. This is a patience bake.

**Good griddle signs**

Deep golden faces, pale set sides, visible rise, and an internal temperature of 200°F.

**Too hot signs**

Dark faces before the center is done, gummy middle, or muffins that seem finished outside but collapse after cooling.

### Step 8: Cool, then the fork rule

Cool on a rack at least 30 minutes before splitting. Then the rule that is genuinely not optional: split with a fork, never a knife.

Work the tines around the equator and pull the halves apart. A knife smears the crumb flat and erases the crannies; the fork tears the structure open and exposes every pocket, which is what catches the butter.

**Fork-split payoff**

This is the most satisfying ten seconds of the whole recipe. The fork opens the crumb instead of flattening it, and those little torn pockets are exactly where the butter wants to go.

**WHAT THIS PAGE IS REALLY ABOUT**

English muffins are not oven bread. They teach patience, surface heat, and the discipline to let the inside finish before the outside gets too dark.

## The Freezer System

One griddle session, weeks of breakfasts.

**How to freeze them**

- Cool completely, at least one hour.
- Fork-split muffin all the way around and pull apart, then put the halves back together. Pre-split is the system.
- Flash freeze on a sheet pan for 1 hour, uncovered.
- Bag and tag, pressing the air out. Date the bag.
- Peak quality is about 3 weeks; good up to 3 months.
- To serve: put the halves straight from the freezer into the toaster. Do not thaw first. The crannies toast crisp while the crumb stays tender.

**Batch rhythm**

Kitchen moment	What you do
Day 1 evening	Mix, fold, finish the short room-temperature rise, and refrigerate.
Day 2 morning	Shape cold, proof, griddle, cool, fork-split, and freeze.
Busy mornings	Toast straight from frozen for quick breakfasts or sandwiches.

**Serving ideas**

Butter and jam, egg sandwiches, breakfast pizzas, open-face melts, or a quick toasted side with soup.

**Freezer pantry rule**

Make the thing once in a calm window, then let the freezer help you on the rushed mornings.

**WHAT THIS PAGE IS REALLY ABOUT**

A freezer batch is not extra work; it is stored effort. This is the kind of bread that earns its place because future-you can actually use it.

## Alternative Flour Adjustments

Use this page when you need to work with the pantry you actually have.

Version	Formula change	Notes
No mill pantry version	420g bread flour + 280g store-bought whole wheat. Reduce milk to 580g.	Same method, still proper crannies.
All bread flour	700g bread flour. Reduce milk to 560g.	Classic diner-style baseline.
Swapping the body grain	Any hard white, Glenn, or hard spring swaps for Kamut 1:1.	No liquid change needed.
Going deeper	Use any red wheat in the 15% character note, 1:1.	Deeper flavor, same crumb expectation.
Spelt	Cap at 15% and reduce milk by 15g.	Its extensible gluten suits the open crumb; keep folds gentle.
Einkorn	Use 10% or less.	Its day is coming in this series, but not in a dough that needs this much structure.
Soft wheats	Bench them for this recipe.	They are better saved for tender bakes like quick breads, sweet muffins, and coffee cakes.

**Fresh-milled flour reminder**

Fresh-milled flour changes from kitchen to kitchen. The grain, the mill, the fineness, and even the age of the flour affect how much liquid it wants. Learn the texture, not just the number.

**WHAT THIS PAGE IS REALLY ABOUT**

The goal is not to trap you inside one exact flour blend. The goal is to teach you which grains are doing which jobs so you can make wise swaps.

## Troubleshooting the Batch

Problem	Likely Cause	How to Fix It Next Time
Dense muffins	Underproofed, over-floured, or handled too tightly.	Keep the dough wet, proof until puffy and pillowy, and shape with a light touch.
Raw or gummy centers	Griddle too hot; outside browned before inside cooked.	Lower the heat and cook to 200°F internal temperature.
No nooks and crannies	Dough too dry, too tightly shaped, or sliced with a knife.	Do not add flour, preserve bubbles while shaping, and split with a fork.
Spreading too much	Dough too warm during shaping or under-strengthened.	Shape cold and complete all three fold sets.
Burned faces	Surface heat too high.	Aim for 300 to 325°F and be patient.

### Dough cues to remember

Stage	What you should see or feel
After mixing	Sticky, loose, and almost batter-like.
After the rest	Bran has started drinking up liquid.
After folds	Smoother, more elastic, and able to hold itself better.
After bulk	Visibly puffed and bubbly, increased by about half.
After fridge	Cold, easier to divide, and still delicate.
After proof	Puffy, pillowy, and slightly jiggy.

**WHAT THIS PAGE IS REALLY ABOUT**

Troubleshooting is part of the lesson. This dough teaches by feel: wet, rested, folded, cold, gentle, patient, and fork-split.

## Kitchen Ledger Notes

Use this page to record what your flour, kitchen temperature, and griddle taught you. The recipe gets you started; your notes make it repeatable.

Batch Detail	Your Notes
Grains used	_____
Milk amount used	_____
Room temperature	_____
Overnight rest length	_____
Proof time before griddle	_____
Griddle surface temperature	_____
Cook time per side	_____
Crumb result	_____
What I would change next time	_____ _____