



Choc chip *soda bread*



Bakers' bread doughs use yeast to rise, but there is a whole genre of 'poor person's bread' that rely on salt or soda to rise.

Perhaps the simplest are North American 'biscuits' – low, dry and uncomplicated but nourishing and filling, often served with gravy for breakfast.

Damper (Australian bush bread) and soda breads are designed to rise more, and might be made with some milk, but they are still

pretty basic. English scones are at the luxury end of the scale – they are softened by butter.

This version is a mid-range soda bread using buttermilk.

Method: Preheat oven to 220°C – this type of bread needs quite a hot oven or the dough will sulk and be flat.

Sift dry ingredients in a large bowl, then stir in choc chips. Make a well in the centre, stir in the eggy milk with a blunt knife.

Mix in buttermilk – enough to make the mix come together into a ball of not too sticky dough. Turn out onto a floured surface, knead just for a minute or two with floured hands. Shape into a ball and place on a floured tray. Flatten slightly and cut a deep cross in the top.

Bake for 15 minutes, reduce temp to 200°C for another 25 minutes. Carefully turn over and give it another 5 mins.

Knock with a knuckle – should sound hollow.

- 500g plain flour
- 60g oat bran
- 1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
- pinch of sea salt
- 1/2 cup semi-sweet choc chips
- 1 large egg whisked with 1 tablespoon milk
- about 300 ml buttermilk

Hints:

Like any of the doughs that rely on salt and/or soda to rise, soda bread is best eaten right out of the oven. Just break it open and eat chunks warm with a little of what you fancy – for this one, we loved just a drizzle of honey.