

Beat: Miscellaneous

Breadmaking Machines Are A Worthwhile Investment

Fresh Bread Anytime

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USPA NEWS - Bread is one of the most important things we eat, because it provides vitamins, minerals and fiber. Because it is so important to us, it is best to eat loaves made from high quality ingredients. Making our own bread, allows us to choose those ingredients and leave out the processed products.

Recently I purchased my first bread maker. I made the decision to get one, because I never seemed to eat up a whole loaf of bread when I bought one from the store. Whether I bought a kilo loaf or 500 gram loaf, most of it would go to waste, even if I refrigerated or froze part of it. I believe it was due in part to the lack of freshness, taste and the ingredients. Everyone prefers fresh baked over store bought processed bread. I know I certainly do. Some have the time and talent to make bread from scratch and do the kneading by hand. My talents lie elsewhere. What follows is what I have learned from my new kitchen appliance.

Breadmaking machines have a variety of settings, depending on what you want it to do. The primary setting is the one you would use the most. You add the ingredients and it does the rest. It will mix, knead, rise and bake the bread. You push the button to start and leave it alone for three hours. I have been using bread mixes, while I learn more about my machine. In the removable pan, you add the kneading blade, then the bread mix and water. Add all your ingredients to the pan, away from the machine. This keeps ingredients from getting in the machine around the heating element. Do it this way and you will have less to clean. You next put the pan in the machine and lock it into place. Close the lid, put it to the basic setting, set loaf size and color you want the crust and press start. The kneading blade stays in through the whole process, including the baking. Occasionally some dough will stick to the side of the pan. I keep a spatula on hand and move it back to the ball of dough.

When the baking is done, you remove the pan from the machine and let it cool for about 20 minutes. After the 20 minutes, turn the pan upside down and the loaf slides out. The pan has a non-stick coating. The kneading blade usually stays in the pan, but when I put it in the sink with some dish soap and water and let it soak, the blade will slide off for cleaning. Your loaf of bread will have a little hole in the bottom from being baked around the kneading blade. I don't mind. Let the bread cool for about another hour, if you can wait that long. Cooling on a rack is best. If you cool it on a plate or cutting board, it will stick. It needs air underneath it while it cools. For storage, some prefer breadboxes, plastic bags, paper bags or foil. I prefer linen bags or towels. Why? It seems the correct way. Before all the others were invented, ladies used linen.

Here in Europe, breadmaking machines at MediaMarkt range in price from €65 to €230. In the United States at Wal-Mart, they range from \$65 to \$170. My machine is on the low end. As a first time buyer, I saw no need to jump into an expensive one.

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