

## Irish Soda Bread

7 cups flour	2 cups raisins
½ cup sugar	1 stick cold unsalted butter
2 tablespoons, plus 2 teaspoons baking powder	1 quart cold buttermilk
2 teaspoons salt	2 large cold eggs
¼ cup caraway seeds	1 teaspoon baking soda

Lightly toast the caraway seeds in a 350° oven for about 5 minutes or until very fragrant. Plump the raisins in hot water for 10 minutes, then drain.

Set a rack in the middle of the oven, and preheat it to 400°. Line two 10-inch cast iron pans, Dutch ovens, or 2 deep 9-inch cake pans with parchment paper.

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, and toasted caraway seeds. Cut in the cold butter with a pastry blender until coarse crumbs are formed. Stir in the raisins.

In another large bowl, beat the eggs until very frothy. Whisk in the buttermilk and the baking soda. Combine the dry and moist ingredients with a heavy, large spoon, mixing until most of the flour has been incorporated. With floured hands knead the dough until all the flour is incorporated, and you can form the dough into 2 large balls. The dough is quite wet and sticky, but don't overwork it.

Place a dough ball into each of the 2 prepared pans, and bake in the oven for about 1 hour until the crust is nicely browned. If the breads become too brown too soon, cover them loosely with foil.

Remove the breads from the pans and cool on a wire rack. Serve the breads warm or cool with cream cheese, butter, or jams.

Save any leftovers tightly wrapped in foil, then enclosed in plastic bags.