



## THE EDIBLE HYPOTHESIS

ALETHEIA CHIANG

# Bread-baking: an art or a science?

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In the toffee-nosed world of authentic artisan boulangerie, the question of whether bread-making is really an art or a science, is one of great dispute.

What most everyone will unanimously acknowledge, however, is that producing great bread, the kind that distinguishes the amateurs from the pros, requires a particular *savoir-faire*—the much-coveted “magic touch,” which can only be acquired through many, many years of trial and practice.

At least, that’s what we thought, pre-2006. It’s been nearly four years since Jim Lahey, owner of the Sullivan Street Bakery in Manhattan, and Mark Bittman of *the New York Times*, revolutionized the world of the everyday baker with their release of the “No-Knead Bread”—a recipe that requires little to no effort, yields beautifully structured bread, and that most importantly, Lahey claims, is simple enough for a four-year-old to master. (In his original article,

Bittman pointed out the inaccuracy of Lahey’s sweeping statement: “The method is complicated enough that you would need a very ambitious eight year old.”)

To start, you will need the four foundational ingredients of all artisan breads: flour, water, salt, and yeast. The truly special ingredient in this recipe, however, is time.

As Harold McGee, author of “On Food and Cooking,” explained: “The long slow rise does over hours what intensive kneading does in minutes: it brings the gluten molecules into side-by-side alignment to maximize

their opportunity to bind to each other and produce a strong, elastic network. The wetness of the dough is an important piece of this because the gluten molecules are more mobile in a high proportion of water, and so can move into alignment easier and faster than if the dough were [sic] stiff.”

If it’s starting to sound scientific to you, let it be known that there are still aesthetics involved.

The trick to getting that professional-looking crackling crust is getting moisture on the bread as the crust develops—a problem that

Lahey solves by placing the dough in a pre-heated, blazing hot, oven-safe pot, and baking it with the lid on for the first half, to retain the steam and moisture.

The results are incredible and extremely forgiving, and I should know—my first attempt at the No Knead Bread last weekend included more mistakes than I care to list, and it still came out gorgeous.

Whether the bread-making process is scientific or artistic is still subject to debate—personally, I think it’s a bit of both—but as Lahey says, “The proof is in the loaf.”

## No-Knead Bread

(Adapted from Jim Lahey, Sullivan Street Bakery)

Time: About 1½ hours plus 14 to 20 hours’ rising

### Ingredients:

3 cups all-purpose or bread flour, more for dusting  
¼ teaspoon instant yeast  
1¼ teaspoons salt  
Cornmeal or wheat bran as needed.

### Directions:

- 1 In a large bowl combine flour, yeast and salt. Add 1 5/8 cups water, and stir until blended; dough will be shaggy and sticky. Cover bowl with plastic wrap. Let dough rest at least 12 hours, preferably about 18, at warm room temperature, about 70 degrees.
- 2 Dough is ready when its surface is dotted with bubbles. Lightly flour a work surface and place dough on it; sprinkle it with a little more flour and fold it over on itself once or twice. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and let rest about 15 minutes.
- 3 Using just enough flour to keep dough from sticking to work surface or to your fingers, gently and quickly shape dough into a ball. Generously coat a cotton towel (not terry cloth) with flour, wheat bran or cornmeal; put dough seam side down on towel and dust with more flour, bran or cornmeal. Cover with another cotton towel and let rise for about 2 hours. When it is ready, dough will be more than double in size and will not readily spring back when poked with a finger.
- 4 At least a half-hour before dough is ready, heat oven to 450 degrees. Put a 6- to 8-quart heavy covered pot (cast iron, enamel, Pyrex or ceramic) in oven as it heats. When dough is ready, carefully remove pot from oven. Slide your hand under towel and turn dough over into pot, seam side up; it may look like a mess, but that is OK. Shake pan once or twice if dough is unevenly distributed; it will straighten out as it bakes. Cover with lid and bake 30 minutes, then remove lid and bake another 15 to 30 minutes, until loaf is beautifully browned. Cool on a rack.

Yield: One 1½-pound loaf.



ALETHEIA CHIANG

## Earthquake felt at UW campus

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY EDITOR

An earthquake hit parts of Ontario and Quebec on Wednesday, June 23 at ap-

proximately 1:41 pm EDT. It had a magnitude of 5.0 according to Natural Resources website of Canada.

The epicenter for the quake was eight kilometers from Val-des-Bois, Quebec.

This earthquake which lasted for about 30 seconds was also felt in many parts of the Kitchener-Waterloo region.

Many people in our university felt it as well. “It was really quick, but quite interesting everything seemed to be swaying”, said Tracy Dietrich who works in Secretariat.

From the president’s office to the top floors of Dana Porter, many people ignored the shaking tables thinking that it was the construction happening at the campus.

The Research and Finance office was in quite a tremor with a number of people talking about the earthquake.

“I thought it was the construction at Quantum and Nano Technology building when the earthquake happened,” said Matt Schumacher one of the people from the Research and Finance office.

“I was sitting in one of those cubicles and I heard some noise.

The desk was shaking but I thought it was the construction,” said Vicky Louder a master’s student working on her thesis on the sixth floor of the Dana Porter Library.

The earthquake was felt in the RIM buildings as well. Co-op student, Taniya Gupta, working in one of the RIM buildings said “I was sitting on my desk and thought my supervisor was shaking my chair. Then my desk started shaking too. When I turned around there was nobody. That is when I realized that it was an earthquake.”

According to research published by the Waterloo Centre for Groundwater Research, based in the University of Waterloo, Southern Ontario is more earthquake-prone than it was believed to be.

This research was conducted on the seismic activities of Lake Ontario.

The study also points out how often an earthquake will return with a certain magnitude level. Large earthquakes have a higher frequency of returning.

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