

Prep time: 25 minutes

Cook time: 45-50 minutes

Rise time: 1.5 – 2 hours

Total time: Approximately 2 hours 30 minutes to 3 hours

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Ingredients

For the Dough:

- All-Purpose Flour: 3 ½ cups (440g), plus extra for dusting. Bread flour can also be used for a chewier texture.
- Warm Water: 1 ¼ cups (300ml), heated to 110°F (43°C). It should feel like warm bathwater, not hot.

- Active Dry Yeast: 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons (1 standard packet, 7g)
- Granulated Sugar: 1 tablespoon (12g). This feeds the yeast.
- Olive Oil: 2 tablespoons (30ml), plus extra for greasing the bowl. Use a good quality extra virgin olive oil.
- Salt: 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons (9g). Kosher salt or fine sea salt is best.
- Black Pepper: 1 teaspoon (2g), freshly ground.

For the Fillings:

- Bacon: 8 slices (about 8 oz or 225g) of thick-cut bacon, cooked until crispy and roughly chopped.
- Olives: 1 cup (about 150g) of pitted Kalamata or Castelvetrano olives, roughly chopped. Kalamata offers a brinier, more intense flavor, while Castelvetrano provides a milder, buttery taste.
- Cheese: 2 cups (about 225g) of shredded cheese, divided. We recommend a blend of 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups sharp cheddar and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Gruyère or Monterey Jack for a perfect melt and flavor profile. You can also use mozzarella for a milder flavor.
- Optional Add-ins: 2 cloves of garlic, minced; 1 teaspoon of dried oregano or rosemary.

Equipment

- Large mixing bowl
- Small bowl or measuring cup
- Wooden spoon or stand mixer with dough hook
- 9×5-inch loaf pan
- Parchment paper
- Kitchen towel or plastic wrap
- Wire cooling rack

Instructions

Part 1: Preparing the Dough (Time: 15 minutes | Intensity: Low)

1. Activate the Yeast: In a small bowl or measuring cup, combine the warm water

(110°F/43°C) and the sugar. Stir to dissolve the sugar. Sprinkle the active dry yeast over the surface of the water. Give it a gentle stir and let it sit for 5-10 minutes. You should see it become frothy and bubbly. If it doesn't, your yeast is likely dead, and you'll need to start over with a new packet.

2. Combine Dry Ingredients: While the yeast proofs, whisk together the flour, salt, and black pepper in a large mixing bowl.
3. Form the Dough: Create a well in the center of the flour mixture. Pour in the activated yeast mixture and the olive oil. Using a wooden spoon, gradually incorporate the flour into the wet ingredients until a shaggy dough forms.
4. Knead the Dough: Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Knead for 8-10 minutes by hand, or use a stand mixer with a dough hook on medium-low speed for 5-7 minutes. The dough should become smooth, elastic, and slightly tacky, but not sticky. If it's too sticky, add a tablespoon of flour at a time. If it's too dry, add a teaspoon of water.

Part 2: The First Rise (Time: 1 - 1.5 hours | Intensity: Passive)

5. Let it Rise: Lightly grease a large, clean bowl with olive oil. Place the kneaded dough in the bowl, turning it once to coat all sides. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap or a clean kitchen towel. Place it in a warm, draft-free area (like a turned-off oven with the light on) and let it rise until it has doubled in size, about 1 to 1.5 hours.

Part 3: Shaping and Filling (Time: 15 minutes | Intensity: Medium)

6. Prepare for Baking: While the dough rises, cook your bacon until crispy. Drain on paper towels, then roughly chop. Chop your olives and shred your cheese. Set everything aside. Grease your 9×5-inch loaf pan and line it with a strip of parchment paper that hangs over the long sides for easy removal.
7. Punch and Roll: Once the dough has doubled, gently punch it down to release the air. Turn it out onto a lightly floured surface. Using a rolling pin, roll the dough into a large rectangle, approximately 9×18 inches.
8. Add the Filling: This is the fun part. Evenly distribute the chopped bacon, olives, and 1 ½ cups of the shredded cheese over the surface of the dough, leaving a 1-inch border along the edges. If you're using garlic and/or herbs, sprinkle them on now.
9. Roll and Shape: Starting from the short end (the 9-inch side), tightly roll the dough into a log, jelly-roll style. Pinch the seam and the ends to seal. Gently place the loaf, seam-side down, into the prepared loaf pan. The dough should fill the pan nicely.

Part 4: The Second Rise & Baking (Time: 30-45 mins rise + 45-50 mins bake | Intensity: Passive to Medium)

10. Second Rise: Loosely cover the loaf pan with a kitchen towel or greased plastic wrap. Let it rise again in a warm place for 30-45 minutes, or until the dough has visibly puffed up and risen just above the rim of the pan.
11. Preheat and Prep: While the loaf is rising for the second time, preheat your oven to

375°F (190°C). Sprinkle the remaining ½ cup of shredded cheese over the top of the loaf.

12. Bake: Bake the bread for 45-50 minutes. The loaf should be deeply golden brown and sound hollow when tapped on the bottom. If the top is browning too quickly, you can tent it loosely with aluminum foil for the last 10-15 minutes of baking.
13. Cool: This is the hardest part. Remove the bread from the oven and immediately transfer it from the pan to a wire cooling rack. Let it cool for at least 15-20 minutes before slicing. If you slice it too early, the cheese will be stringy and the bread may crumble.

Serving Suggestions

This Olive, Bacon, and Cheese Bread is a star on its own. Enjoy it warm, sliced thick, with a pat of salted butter. It pairs beautifully with a bowl of creamy tomato soup or a crisp green salad. It's also an incredible base for a gourmet sandwich, like a turkey and avocado club or a simple BLT.

Nutrition Information (Estimated)

Per slice (based on 12 slices):

- Calories: 290 kcal

- Protein: 11g
- Carbohydrates: 30g
- Fat: 14g
- Saturated Fat: 6g
- Cholesterol: 30mg
- Sodium: 650mg
- Fiber: 2g
- Sugar: 2g