



recipe:

Ethiopian Injera

Injera is not only a kind of bread—it's also an eating utensil.

In Ethiopia and Eritrea, this spongy, sour flatbread is used to scoop up meat and vegetable stews. *Injera* also lines the tray on which the stews are served, soaking up their juices as the meal progresses. When this edible tablecloth is eaten, the meal is officially over.

Injera is made with *teff*, a tiny, round grain that flourishes in the highlands of Ethiopia. While teff is very nutritious, it contains practically no gluten. This makes teff ill-suited for making raised bread, however *injera* still takes advantage of the special properties of yeast. A short period of fermentation gives it an airy, bubbly texture, and also a slightly sour taste.

Ethiopian and Eritrean immigrants have modified their recipes after moving to the United States or Europe, depending on what grains are available to them. The *injera* you find in many East African restaurants in the United States includes both teff and wheat flours. Most *injera* made in Ethiopia and Eritrea, on the other hand, is made solely with teff.



Injera



CAUTION

Kids, please don't try this at home without the help of an adult.



Tip
Depending on where you live, teff flour can be difficult to come by. Try a well-stocked health food store.

Recipe Conversions

What Do I Need?

- 1/4 cup teff flour
- 3/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup water
- a pinch of salt
- peanut or vegetable oil



Teff grain

* Tip

If you have teff grain instead of flour, first grind it in a clean coffee grinder, or with a mortar and pestle.

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- a mixing bowl
 - a nonstick pan or cast-iron skillet

What Do I Do?

- 1.** Put the teff flour in the bottom of a mixing bowl, and sift in the all-purpose flour.
- 2.** Slowly add the water, stirring to avoid lumps.
- 3.** Put the batter aside for a day or more (up to three days) to allow it to ferment. In this time, your *injera* batter will start to bubble and acquire the slight tanginess for which it's known. Note: If you find that your *injera* batter does not ferment on its own, try adding a teaspoon of yeast.
- 4.** Stir in the salt.
- 5.** Heat a nonstick pan or lightly oiled cast-iron skillet until a water drop dances on the surface. Make sure the surface of the pan is smooth: Otherwise, your *injera* might fall

? Did You Know?

Teff is extremely high in fiber, iron, and calcium.

* Tip

Many Ethiopians in America use square-shaped, electric, nonstick pans. These heat evenly and make it easy to remove the *injera* once

apart when you try to remove it.

6. Coat the pan with a thin layer of batter. *Injera* should be thicker than a crêpe, but not as thick as a traditional pancake. It will rise slightly when it heats.



7. Cook until holes appear on the surface of the bread. Once the surface is dry, remove the bread from the pan and let it cool.

it is cooked.

? Did You Know?

Teff is the smallest grain in the world. It takes about 150 teff seeds to equal the weight of a kernel of wheat!

What's Going On?

If you've ever cooked pancakes, making *injera* might seem familiar. In both cases, tiny bubbles form on top as the batter cooks. Keeping an eye on these bubbles is a great way to see how close the pancake or *injera* is to being ready without peeking underneath.

These bubbles come from the carbon-dioxide produced by the leavener—usually baking powder or soda in the case of pancakes, “wild” yeast in the case of *injera*. Neither batter contains much gluten. Most pancake recipes tell you not to mix the batter too much: If you do, gluten will develop, making them too chewy. Teff, the grain used to make *injera*, contains very little gluten to begin with. In both cases, the result is the same: With no gummy substance to “blow up,” most of the carbon-dioxide from the leaveners rapidly escapes

into the air, leaving the little popped bubbles that contribute to the distinctive textures of these breads.

What Else Can I Try?

- You can experiment by adjusting the ratios of wheat and teff flours in your recipe, or by adding another type of flour altogether. You can also let your batter ferment for more or less time, depending on how sour you like your *injera* to be.
- To see for yourself how little gluten there is in teff, try kneading some teff flour into a ball of dough. (You might also include teff flour in the [gluten ball activity](#)). You'll get very different results than when you use wheat flour.

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