



### **New England Brown Bread in a Can**

*Round steamed bread slices are delicious slathered with butter*

Nonstick cooking spray like Baker's Joy or greased coffee can

1 cup all-purpose flour

1 cup white whole wheat flour

1 cup yellow cornmeal or golden grits

1-1/2 teaspoons baking soda

2 teaspoons salt

3/4 cup molasses

2 cups whole fat sour cream

1 cup currants

### **Prepare the Can for Cooking:**

1. Pour 2 inches of water into a large Dutch oven. Locate a metal trivet or ovenproof mini tart dish to place in the bottom of a large Dutch oven pot to stand the can on for cooking.
2. Clean and dry round 2-to-3-pound coffee or chicken can. Use a smooth-edge can opener to cut off the top lid. Don't remove the bottom of the can.

3. Coat the inside of the can with nonstick cooking spray; line the inside and bottom of the can with parchment paper. Set it aside.

### **Prepare the Bread Batter:**

1. In a large bowl, whisk together the flours and cornmeal, baking soda and salt for about 30 seconds to combine. Add the molasses and sour cream; stir until mixture just comes together. Stir in the currants.
2. Carefully, spoon the batter into the prepared can; Cover can with a small piece of greased aluminum foil. (Greasing will keep the rising bread from sticking to the foil.) Then, tie aluminum foil around the can with a piece of kitchen twine.
3. Place the can into the Dutch oven pan on top of the dish or trivet. Cover the Dutch oven pan with a large sheet of aluminum foil; bring the water to a rolling boil. Steam for 2 hours on the top of a stove over medium heat. Make sure to add more water if needed. (We checked the pot about every 15 to 20 minutes as it cooked to maintain a high level of steaming.)
4. Remove the can carefully from the Dutch oven pot. Unmold the round bread by shaking gently from the can. Carefully remove the parchment paper. Place the bread on a cooling rack to cool slightly.
5. Serve bread warm with a slab of butter or your favorite soup.

Yield: 1 round bread loaf Serves: about 4 to 6

**Cook's Note:** The recipe can substitute rye flour or graham flour for white whole wheat flour. If sour cream isn't available, use whole-fat Greek yogurt. Make sure that it is cooking with enough steam and check the bread for doneness. I haven't done this yet, but it is really a "quick bread" and probably can be cooked in a loaf pan.

**Recipe by:** Gesine Bullock-Prado, *My Vermont Table*, Countryman Press, 2023.  
Original Recipe: *Brown Bread in a Can*, The original recipe prepared 2 cans of bread.

**About the Recipe:** Brown bread is a Northeastern staple that is frequently baked in a can. The texture is very similar to a muffin or quick bread. It has a dense texture since it combines several flours and cornmeal. It is sweetened with molasses and if desired, raisins or currants are added. The round shape is unique, and the can usually leaves circular ridges that make slicing easy. It is popular to serve with soup, baked beans, or is enjoyed with just a smear of butter.

### **History of Brown Bread in a Can**

So how did bread even end up in a can, and why is it so popular in New England? Its exact origins are tough to pin down, but most sources agree that it was created by colonists in New England. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the colonists started making canned brown bread with rye and wheat because they were cheap and easy to get. It was sometimes mixed with molasses to make it a little sweeter, and was steamed instead of baked, because they didn't have ovens and cooked over open fires. When molasses was added, it became like a version of steamed pudding.

For More Information See:

<https://www.mashed.com/270569/the-surprising-origin-of-canned-bread/>

