



How to Substitute Bread Flour for All-Purpose Flour

AUTHOR [Kye Ameden](#)

DATE July 21, 2016



COMMENTS 248

RECIPE
[Classic Sandwich Bread](#)

"I want to make a bread recipe that calls for all-purpose flour, and all I have on my shelf right now is bread flour. Is it okay to substitute bread flour for all-purpose flour?"

There are countless reasons you may end up with a distinctive blue bag of King Arthur Unbleached Bread Flour on your pantry shelf. Maybe someone else did the grocery shopping and didn't know there was a difference between bread flour and all-purpose. Or perhaps there's a big snowstorm coming, and bread flour was all that was left in the supermarket.

Or maybe there was just something enticing about the blue bag that called to you, promising you lofty loaves of homemade bread.

Regardless of how it gets there, once bread flour is in your pantry you might wonder about its potential – what can you actually do with bread flour? How can you substitute bread flour for all-purpose flour?

You can always check the back of the bag, where you'll find the number to our Baker's Hotline, 855-371-BAKE(2253). We're here whenever you find yourself stumped in the kitchen. Like when you only have bread flour in the house, but the recipe you've been dying to make calls for all-purpose flour. Can you reach for the blue bag? Give us a call! We're happy to help.

And while we love hearing your baking conundrums on the hotline, we also want to give you the tools you need to make informed decisions on your own. That way when there's a sudden need for fresh bread (which happens often in my family), you'll be ready to go – no need to pick up the phone.



“How is bread flour different from all-purpose flour?”

It's a question we hear almost every day on the hotline.

One answer is protein content.

Bread flour is milled from hard spring wheat, which has a higher protein content than the hard winter wheat used in all-purpose flour. Protein adds strength to dough and enables loaves of bread to rise high. Our bread flour checks in at 12.7% protein, while our all-purpose flour is at 11.7%.

“So can I use bread flour in a recipe that calls for all-purpose flour?”

That's the next logical question eager callers ask.

Before responding with a resounding “Yes,” a few of us hotline bakers thought some testing was in order. So I headed to the test kitchen to see exactly what would happen when I substitute bread flour for all-purpose flour in some of our favorite bread recipes.

Sandwich bread

There's no better place to start than our [Classic Sandwich Bread](#). It's the kind of bread that makes your toes curl under (in a good way!) when you butter up a slice.

This buxom loaf calls for all-purpose flour. But say you've got half a bag of bread flour to use up. (Plus, you might want a little more chew to make those BLTs you've been dreaming about.)

I tried the recipe with both all-purpose and bread flour to see what would happen.



Our Classic Sandwich Bread recipe made with all-purpose flour on the left; the same recipe made with bread flour on the right.

These two beautiful loaves came out of the oven. They rose about the same amount, but you can see the all-purpose version mushroomed a bit over the sides of the pan.

The bread flour loaf, on the other hand, held its shape. This is because dough made with bread flour absorbs slightly more liquid (due to the flour's higher protein level), so it's stiffer; the resulting loaf rises upwards rather than outwards.

Don't worry, the difference in absorption isn't enough to cause textural problems or hinder the rise of your loaf. As you can see, both of these loaves are worthy of making a perfect BLT.

Now you might be wondering if there were any surprises inside of these loaves...



...but nope, no surprises!

If you look closely at the crumb (the small holes that create the structure of the bread), you might see that the bread flour loaf on the right has slightly smaller holes, or what we call a “tighter crumb.” Granted, the difference was quite small.

Both versions were perfect candidates for thick slices of toast slathered with butter and jam. So go ahead and use bread flour in the recipe, same amount as all-purpose. (Remember to fluff and sprinkle your flour or use a scale to measure by weight.)

Whole wheat bread

Oftentimes bread flour or all-purpose flour is substituted for some of the whole wheat flour to help give whole grain loaves a boost. The bran in whole wheat flour impairs the gluten, so using a flour with more gluten can benefit the loaf's structure and rise.

We wanted to see if there was a difference between using bread flour and all-purpose flour to strengthen the rise in a whole wheat loaf. So we decided to test it in our Classic 100% Whole Wheat Bread, using 50/50 whole wheat and all-purpose flour in one loaf, and 50/50 whole wheat and bread flour in the other.

We wondered if the slight difference we saw in the two sandwich loaves would be more pronounced when the flour was given the task of improving the performance of whole grains.



Classic 100% Whole Wheat Sandwich Bread made with half all-purpose flour on the left and half bread flour on the right.

The result? The all-purpose loaf was wider across the top (more "mushroomed") than the bread flour loaf, just like we saw with the Classic Sandwich Bread recipe. But other than the all-purpose loaf being slightly more tender, there was little difference between the two.



Half all-purpose flour version on the left, half bread flour on the right. Slicing into the loaves revealed insides that were almost identical.

Rise, structure, crust, crumb? Very similar.

So, can you substitute bread flour for all-purpose flour? The answer is –

We answer with a confident “Yes” when callers ask if they can use bread flour in place of all-purpose (or vice versa) in their bread recipes – in a pinch.

For the very best loaf, we always advise bakers to **use the type of flour called for in the recipe: bread, or all-purpose**. After all, if a flour is specified, the recipe was developed to provide optimum results when you use the designated flour. These recipes carefully match the flour’s protein level to the amount of liquid called for, creating the ideal hydration – and a perfectly risen loaf.

But in a pinch, it’s totally OK to substitute. The consistency of the dough and the structure of the bread may vary, but you’ll still be rewarded with a wonderful homemade loaf regardless of whether you use bread flour or all-purpose flour.

So go forth, and bake! That old recipe of Grandma’s you’ve been too nervous to try because it calls for simply “flour” is waiting for you – give it a shot! Use bread flour if you want a tighter crumb and a loaf that holds its shape, or choose all-purpose if you’re looking for a slightly more open texture and a bit more tenderness.

I like to remind the people I chat with on the hotline that yeast dough is a living, breathing thing, and it's your job as the baker to give it what it needs. You don't want a stiff dough, nor a slack dough, but something that feels perfectly right.

Add a little water if the dough seems dry, or a sprinkle of flour if it feels too wet. Visualize the adhesive strip on a sticky note – that slightly tacky feeling is what you're shooting for.



Once you've got that blue bag of bread flour in your pantry, the possibilities are endless. Substitute it into a favorite recipe to see how it lifts your loaf, or use it in a recipe calling for bread flour to really see what it can do.

[Japanese Milk Bread Rolls](#), [Oatmeal Toasting & Sandwich Bread](#), [Soft Cinnamon Rolls](#), and [12-Grain Cinnamon Bread](#) are just a few of the tempting recipes that await. I promise they'll make you thankful you picked up a bag of bread flour.

Note: The information in this post pertains to King Arthur Flours only. Other national brands tend to mill lower-protein wheat, and produce lower-protein flour. So substituting, say, our King Arthur Bread Flour for another company's all-purpose flour may mean a protein swing of 2 to 3 points – which could create a significant difference in your bread's rise and texture.

If you love using bread flour and have favorite ways to use it, we hope you'll share your experiences in the comments, below.

Tagged: [cheese](#), [bread](#), [sandwich bread](#), [yeast](#), [bread flour](#)

Filed Under: [Tips and Techniques](#) [Recipes](#)



THE AUTHOR

About Kye Ameden

Kye Ameden grew up in Fairlee, Vermont and has always had a love of food, farms, and family. After graduating from St. Lawrence University, she became an employee-owner at King Arthur Flour and is a proud member of the Digital Marketing Team.

[VIEW ALL POSTS BY KYE AMEDEN](#) >

Recent Posts



RECIPES

How to shape bagels

Make bagels that look as good as they taste

BY KYE AMEDEN



TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

Brown butter

How to make your buttery baked goods even better

BY PJ HAMEL



RECIPES

Grain-free recipes for a new year

Wholesome, delicious ways to bake without grains

BY POSIE BRIEN



DON'T MISS THIS

Scone Baking Guide

[LEARN MORE](#)

Interested In More?

See our complete collection of Tips and Techniques posts.

[VIEW ALL](#)

CALL

CHAT | EMAIL

Comments

DONNA GORDON

JANUARY 14, 2020 AT 6:57AM

Is it possible to substitute with almond flour? I can't eat grains. Maybe add protein powder to the recipe?

REPLY

ANNABELLE AT KING ARTHUR FLOUR

JANUARY 14, 2020 AT 3:14PM

Hi Donna! Almond flour can be used to replace up to 25% of the flour in non-yeasted recipes calling for all-purpose flour. In yeast recipes, it can't replace the flour, but you can add up to 1/3 cup of almond flour for every cup of wheat flour. We discuss this in our blog article [Baking with Almond Flour](#). Neither of these things are very useful for you since you can't have grains, but we just shared a

blog article on [baking.grain-free](#) that will be useful as it links to some delicious recipes that use only almond and coconut flour, which is what you're going to want to use: recipes that are already [designed to be grain-free](#). We have a [Grain-Free recipe collection](#) as well.

REPLY

SUE C.

JANUARY 13, 2020 AT 2:34PM

Every so often I'll sub bread flour for AP flour when making biscuits; however, I recall a comment on KAF website stating doing so alters the finished product....and not necessarily in a good way! So I guess it's safe to assume that AP flour is the go-to when making biscuits???

REPLY

ANNABELLE AT KING ARTHUR FLOUR

JANUARY 14, 2020 AT 3:04PM

Use what creates the biscuits that you enjoy most, Sue, there are no rights and wrongs necessarily! Bread flour's higher protein often means a chewier texture which isn't common in biscuits. Folks often look for a more tender texture with biscuits. Our biscuit recipes usually call for either all-purpose flour or our self-rising flour which has a very low protein content.

REPLY

LEA

JANUARY 13, 2020 AT 1:45PM

I used bread flour the other day for pancakes because I was running low on AP and they seemed to get very fluffy, but I also added a little extra liquid because I thought they looked dry. Interesting.

REPLY

JAYCEE

JANUARY 14, 2020 AT 11:04AM

I used bread flour once for pancakes cuz it was all I had. my SO called them duracakes. cuz they were so sturdy and rubbery. he loved them because they didn't soak up syrup like normal pancakes do. they were awful.

REPLY

LILY

DECEMBER 24, 2019 AT 7:58AM

Why does some recipes have different gram weights for their bread flour?

I don't know which brand of bread flour they used

So if I am using King Arthur bread flour should I just use 120 grams for each cup of bread flour used in the recipe

Or should I use the gram weight that they listed in their recipe?

Ex 3.5 cups bread flour using King Arthur brand is 420 grams because 1 cup King Arthur bread flour is 120 grams

Their recipe is asking me to use 500 grams of bread flour for 3.5 cups

What should I do?

REPLY

ANNABELLE AT KING ARTHUR FLOUR

DECEMBER 27, 2019 AT 11:10AM

Hi Lily, this is a roadblock for any baker because there are, unfortunately, no universal weights set for flour by volume. So for King Arthur's bread flour, you're correct that our recipes are written for one cup of our bread flour to weight 120 grams.

Following other recipes though, go with the weight measurement rather than volume. The volume difference just means that when they measure their bread flour by volume, they pack it down more densely into the cup than we do.

A gram is always a gram, so you'll be fine no matter what. If the recipe you're using only lists volume measurements, see if you're able to find a description of the way they measure their flour. Fluffing it up and scraping the excess, scooping, spooning it into the cup, etc. so you can try to get the most accurate results.

Use 500 grams for the recipe you're making.

REPLY

CELESTE PHILLIPS

DECEMBER 4, 2019 AT 8:12AM

My husband always makes bread with King Arthur all purpose flour. We decided to use King Arthur bread flour and found that the smell and taste are very different. Why, or it might be our taste buds?!

Thank you.

REPLY

MORGAN AT KING ARTHUR FLOUR

DECEMBER 5, 2019 AT 3:10PM

Hi there, Celeste! We're really not sure why the loaf made with bread flour has a different taste and smell, as bread flour shouldn't have these effects. Things that typically cause this to happen are if the flour has spoiled or if it's picked up smells from being stored in the freezer or fridge. We hope this helps and if you'd like help to troubleshoot further, please feel free to give our Baker's Hotline folks a call at 855-371-BAKE (2253)!

REPLY

Post A Comment

YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED. REQUIRED FIELDS ARE MARKED *

COMMENT*

NAME*

EMAIL*

▼ CAPTCHA

This question is for testing whether or not you are a human visitor and to prevent automated spam submissions.

POST COMMENT

BLOG

Recommended Posts

How to shape bagels

Make bagels that look as good as they taste

Brown butter

How to make your buttery baked goods even better

Our 2019 Recipe of the Year, New Year's edition

Our Classic Birthday Cake gets all dressed up

How to make flavor-infused sugar

Vanilla sugar and beyond

Recommended Products

**Baking Parchment Paper - Set of
100 Half-Sheets**

★★★★★ 1952 REVIEWS

\$22.95

[ADD TO CART](#)

**King Arthur Unbleached Bread
Flour - 5 lb.**

★★★★★ 330 REVIEWS

\$4.95

[ADD TO CART](#)

Vietnamese Cinnamon - 3 oz.

★★★★★ 1057 REVIEWS

\$6.95

ADD TO CART

Espresso Powder - 3 oz.

★★★★★ 619 REVIEWS

\$7.95

ADD TO CART