

# Can Do

**A**S I RESEARCHED the traditional New England baked bean supper for this issue (see “Full of Beans,” page 38), I fell for the bread that typically comes with the meal. Wholesome, substantial brown bread—equal parts corn, rye, and wheat flour combined with molasses and buttermilk—is steamed in a coffee can that rests in a hot-water bath, on the stove top or in the oven, until the batter rises into a spongy bread. The recipe has roots in the Colonial era, when New Englanders baked a similar loaf in a wood-fired oven. Though it’s hard to pinpoint when people began steaming brown bread, that method had caught on widely by the mid 1800s, when, according to historian Sandy Oliver, brown bread surged in popularity due to a revival of interest in early American foods. Today’s brown bread is lighter than the original, because of the addition of baking powder, which, when activated by acids in the buttermilk and the molasses, releases carbon dioxide and leavens the bread. You can buy a respectable version made by B&M, the Maine cannery that’s also one of this country’s largest producers of baked beans. But we’ve found that this rich, sweet, tangy bread is easy (not to mention fun) to make. We wouldn’t think of eating baked beans without a thick slab of it to sop up the sauce.

—Gabiella Gershenson



## Brown Bread

SERVES 6–8

Chewy and dark, this bread gets its acidic tang from buttermilk and molasses. A coffee can molds the loaf into its signature cylinder shape.

- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup stone-ground cornmeal
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup rye flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup whole-wheat flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup all-purpose flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup unsulfured molasses
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup buttermilk
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- Butter, for greasing and serving

**1** Heat oven to 300°. In a large bowl, whisk together cornmeal, rye, whole-wheat and all-purpose flours, salt, and baking powder and soda; set aside. In another bowl, whisk together molasses, buttermilk, and egg until smooth; pour over dry ingredients, and stir with a spoon until just combined. Transfer to a cleaned and greased 13-oz. metal coffee can, and cover can with a piece of foil; place in the center of a 6-qt. saucepan. Pour 6 cups water into pot around can, and bring to a boil over high heat. Transfer pan to oven, and bake until a toothpick inserted into the middle of the bread comes out clean,  $2\frac{1}{2}$ –3 hours.

**2** Remove can from water bath, and let cool for 20 minutes. Uncover and unmold bread from can; let cool completely. Slice into thick rounds and spread with butter.



## Frenching 101

For the chicken lollipops recipe on page 32, frenching the chicken wings—cutting and shaping them to expose a length of bone—creates a built-in handle to grasp as you eat the succulent meat. Here’s how to do it: **1** Begin with a whole chicken wing, consisting of a fat drumstick at one end, a drumette in the middle, and a pointed wing tip. **2** Grip the drumstick in one hand and the wing tip in the other. Bend the wing back forcefully at the joint between the drum-

stick and the drumette, so that a bone at the end of the drumstick pops out through the skin. **3** Place the wing on a cutting board, and use a knife to cut through the joint between the drumstick and the drumette, fully separating them. Then, gripping the exposed bone at the end of the drumstick, push all the meat to the opposite end, to form a length of bone topped by a knob of meat. **4** Grip the remaining drumette and wing tip in opposite hands, and bend them back at the joint, as you did in step 2, to reveal the ends of two bones—one larger, one

smaller and pointed. **5** Place the drumette and wing tip on the cutting board, and use a knife to cut off the wing tip, or reserve it for making stock. **6** Take the smaller, pointed bone in one hand, and wiggle it until it is free of the flesh; discard. Then, gripping the bone at the end of the drumette, push all the meat to the opposite end, to form a length of bone topped by a knob of meat, as you did in step 3. Repeat with the rest of the chicken wings, then marinate and fry according to the directions in the recipe. —Monica Florendo