

GOLDEN SAFFRON & FENNEL LOAF

(from the Bewitching Kitchen, inspired by [Flo Makanai](#))

125 g sourdough starter (at 100% hydration)
250 g water (divided)
large pinch of saffron
375 g bread flour
7 g salt
1 tsp fennel seeds

Heat 50 ml (no need to be precise) of water in a microwave until almost boiling, add the saffron and let it sit until it cools to almost room temperature, stirring every now and then. Strain the saffron water through a fine mesh colander, and add to the rest of the water for a final volume of 250ml. Reserve.

Add the active starter to a large bowl, mix it with the water until it dissolves more or less smoothly. Add the flour and the fennel seeds, and briefly do a few kneading moves to form a shaggy mess. Cover loosely with plastic wrap for 20 minutes.

Sprinkle the salt over the dough and incorporate by kneading lightly and folding the dough on itself. You can keep the dough in the bowl, or transfer to a surface. After 20-30 seconds of kneading/folding, cover the dough again and let it sit for 40 minutes (total rising time up to this point: 1 hour).

Repeat cycles of quick kneading/folding two more times, 40 to 50 minutes apart. After the third and final kneading cycle, let the dough sit for 20 to 30 minutes, shape it as a round or oval loaf, and leave it at room temperature 30 minutes longer. Total rising time from beginning to end: about 3 and a half hours. Place it in the fridge overnight, loosely covered.

Remove the dough from the fridge 2 hours before. Heat the oven to 450F. If using a clay pot, place it in the cold oven as you turn it on. Bake the bread covered for 30 minutes, remove cover, and allow it to fully bake (reducing the temperature to 425F if the bread seems to be browning too fast) for 12 to 15 minutes longer. Remove to a rack to cool completely before slicing.