WHEN I first wrote about Jim Lahey’s no-knead bread almost two years ago, I could not have predicted its immediate and wild popularity. How many novices it attracted to bread baking is anyone’s guess. But certainly there were plenty of existing bread bakers who excitedly tried it, liked it and immediately set about trying to improve it. I was among them. I wondered how the recipe of Mr. Lahey, who owns the Sullivan Street Bakery, could be made faster (it calls for 14 to 20 hours’ rising time) and with a higher percentage of whole grain.

Improving on its texture and taste, with my limited patience, energy and equipment, seemed impossible. Besides, I was satisfied with the consistent results of the original, so why mess around?

Still, there was the issue of time. I like the leisurely pace of Mr. Lahey’s bread, but I can’t always plan so far ahead. Getting the start-to-finish time down to a few hours seemed worth a try and, really, the solution was simple: use more yeast.

I knew Mr. Lahey wouldn’t approve of this (and he didn’t; as he makes clear in my video interview with him at nytimes.com/dining), because he believes that the best bread is fermented slowly, with a minimum of yeast. But my shortcut recipe here, which requires just four and a half hours’ rising, if not quite as good as the original, can be done in an afternoon.

Changing the profile of the bread’s ingredients proved to be a real challenge. I like a white bread with a shattering crust as much as the next person, but there are many good reasons to eat real whole grain bread at least part of the time. After much experimenting, mess and disappointment, I found that a real whole grain bread could indeed be produced without kneading. The crust has toughness but not the real crispness that is the trademark of breads containing most or all white flour.

The process requires a standard loaf pan or the bread will not rise. The result is wonderful: you can use 100 percent whole grains, you can vary their percentages all you want (though all-rye bread doesn’t rise much at all) and you can add nongrain flours, sweeteners or dairy. If the proportions of liquid, solid and yeast stay the same, the timing and results will be consistent.

I have not shown the whole grain bread to Mr. Lahey, who, in fairness, has been encouraging.

It is likely that when he gets around to producing a whole grain loaf, it’ll be better than mine. But I don’t think it could be easier.

Recipe: Fast No-Knead Whole Wheat Bread Time: About 1 hour, plus 5 hours’ resting

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2 cups whole wheat flour

1/2 cup whole rye flour

1/2 cup coarse cornmeal

1 teaspoon instant yeast

1 1/2 teaspoons salt

Oil as needed.

1. Combine flours, cornmeal, yeast and salt in a large bowl. Add 1 1/2 cups water and stir until
blended; dough will be shaggy. Cover bowl with plastic wrap. Let dough rest about 4 hours at warm room temperature, about 70 degrees.

2. Oil a standard loaf pan (8 or 9 inches by 4 inches; nonstick works well). Lightly oil your hands and shape dough into a rough rectangle. Put it in pan, pressing it out to the edges. Brush top with a little more oil. Cover with plastic wrap and let rest 1 hour more.

3. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bake bread about 45 minutes, or until loaf reaches an internal temperature of 210 degrees. Remove bread from pan and cool on a rack.

Yield: 1 loaf.

Recipe: Speedy No-Knead Bread Time: About 1 hour, plus 4 1/2 hours’ resting

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3 cups bread flour
1 packet (1/4 ounce) instant yeast
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
Oil as needed.

1. Combine flour, yeast and salt in a large bowl. Add 1 1/2 cups water and stir until blended; dough will be shaggy. Cover bowl with plastic wrap. Let dough rest about 4 hours at warm room temperature, about 70 degrees.

2. Lightly oil a work surface and place dough on it; fold it over on itself once or twice. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and let rest 30 minutes more.

3. At least a half-hour before dough is ready, heat oven to 450 degrees. Put a 6-to-8-quart heavy covered pot (cast iron, enamel, Pyrex or ceramic) in oven as it heats. When dough is ready, carefully remove pot from oven. Slide your hand under dough and put it into pot, seam side up. Shake pan once or twice if dough is unevenly distributed; it will straighten out as it bakes.

4. Cover with lid and bake 30 minutes, then remove lid and bake another 15 to 30 minutes, until loaf is beautifully browned. Cool on a rack.

Yield: 1 big loaf.