

## What is a Bread Box?

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A bread box is a container used for the storage of bread and other baked goods. They were a common household kitchen item until bread started being made commercially with food preservatives and wrapped in plastic. A bread box is designed for the purpose of keeping bread fresh while helping to maintain uncluttered kitchen surfaces. Typically, these boxes are very tightly sealed. When they work as intended, they trap moisture and prevent bread from becoming stale too quickly. They can also be helpful in keeping bread and other baked goods safe from pests, such as mice.

Often, individuals choose to store bread in refrigerators, thinking that keeping it cold will lock in moisture and prevent it from going stale. Unfortunately, the opposite often occurs and bread stored in the refrigerator may begin going stale after just one day. This is due to the fact that moisture loss doesn't really cause bread to go stale. Staleness is caused by retrogradation, a process by which starch molecules crystallize. Retrogradation occurs much faster in the cold temperatures of normal refrigeration, making the refrigerator a poor choice for storing bread (however it is ok to freeze bread, as freezing traps the moisture as ice, and thus suspends retrogradation).

Instead of refrigerating bread to keep it fresh, it is best to store it at room temperature in a container designed to retain moisture, such as a bread box. There are many types on the market, allowing consumers to find models that fit just about any kitchen decor and personal style preference. There are models made of wood, acrylic, ceramic, enamel, stoneware and stainless steel. These boxes come with many different types of lids as well, including hinged, roll-top, handled, lift-off and drop-down versions. Consumers can even find bread boxes with handy attachments, such as pull-out bread boards.

A properly designed bread box will:

- Keep its contents at room temperature, prolonging edible storage time.
- Have just enough ventilation to allow some airflow, thus reducing condensation, which helps to prevent the formation of mold.
- Have a tight enough seal to slow the drying process, as well as to protect the contents from mice and all other pests, including ants and flies.

When you're in the market for a bread box, it is wise to consider the amount of space you have in your kitchen. There are a wide variety of space-saver models which are compact by design, or which can be mounted underneath a cabinet. Keep in mind that many bread box models only hold one loaf of bread. If you have a large family, you may do well to consider purchasing a larger model, or even a floor standing baked goods cabinet. They even manufacture clear bread boxes, a smart idea for those given to forgetting what they have stored in containers.