

French Bread

Yield: 2 (15" loaves); 24 servings

Ingredients

- 3 to 3 1/2 c AP flour or bread flour
- 1 T sugar
- 1 t salt
- 1 package regular or quick active dry yeast (2 1/4 t)
- 1 c very warm water (120°F)
- 2 T vegetable oil
- Cornmeal
- 1 egg white
- 1 T cold water

Optional: Poppy seed or sesame seed

Variation:

Garlic Herb French Bread: Add 1 teaspoon dried oregano leaves, 1 teaspoon dried basil leaves and 2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh garlic with the 2 cups flour.

Directions

Day 1

- In large bowl, mix 2 cups of the flour, the sugar, salt and yeast. Add warm water and oil. Beat with electric mixer on low speed 1 minute, scraping bowl frequently. Beat on medium speed 1 minute, scraping bowl frequently. Stir in enough remaining flour, 1/2 cup at a time, to make dough easy to handle (dough will be soft).
- On lightly floured surface, knead dough about 5 minutes or until smooth and elastic. Grease large bowl with shortening or spray with cooking spray. Place dough in bowl, turning dough to grease all sides. Cover and let rise in warm place 1 hour 30 minutes to 2 hours or until dough has doubled in size. (Rising time is longer than times for traditional breads, which gives the typical French bread texture.) Dough is ready if indentation remains when touched. **(For class, we will allow this to raise overnight in the refrigerator)**

Day 2

- Grease large cookie sheet with shortening or spray with cooking spray; sprinkle with cornmeal. Gently push fist into dough to deflate; divide in half. On lightly floured surface, roll each half into 15 x 8-inch rectangle. Roll dough up tightly, beginning at 15-inch side, to form a loaf. Pinch edge of dough into roll to seal. Roll gently back and forth to taper ends. Place both loaves on cookie sheet.
- Cut 1/4-inch-deep slashes across tops of loaves at 2-inch intervals with sharp knife. Brush loaves with cold water. Let rise uncovered in warm place about 1 hour or until dough has doubled in size. **(For class, we will allow this to raise overnight in the refrigerator)**

Day 3

- Heat oven to 375°F. Place a square cake pan on the bottom shelf of the stove to heat up while preheating.
- In small bowl, mix egg white and 1 tablespoon cold water; brush over loaves. Sprinkle with poppy or sesame seed.
- Add 1 c of water to the square cake pan in the preheated oven.
- Add the loaves on the center rack and bake 25 to 30 minutes or until loaves are golden brown and sound hollow when tapped. Remove from cookie sheet to wire rack; cool.

Variation:

Crusty Hard Rolls:

Grease large cookie sheet with shortening or spray with cooking spray; sprinkle with cornmeal. After deflating dough, divide into 12 equal parts. Shape each part into a ball; place on cookie sheet. Brush rolls with cold water. Let rise uncovered about 1 hour or until dough has doubled in size. Heat oven to 425°F. In small bowl, mix egg white and 1 tablespoon cold water; brush over rolls. Sprinkle with poppy or sesame seed. Bake 15 to 20 minutes or until brown. 12 rolls.