

Crusty French Bread

1 1/4-ounce package active dry yeast

2 1/4 cups warm water (105 to 115 F)

1 tablespoon sugar

5 to 5 1/2 cups bread flour or all-purpose flour*

1 tablespoon salt

1 egg, slightly beaten

1 tablespoon milk

*can substitute up to half with whole wheat flour

Dissolve yeast in warm water in large bowl; stir in sugar. Let stand 45 minutes. Stir in 3 cups flour and salt; beat until smooth. Stir in enough remaining flour to make dough easy to handle.

Turn dough onto lightly floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic (about 5 minutes). Place into greased bowl; turn greased-side up. Cover with greased plastic wrap; let rise in warm place until double in size (about 1 1/2 hours). (Dough is ready if indentation remains when touched.)

Punch down dough; divide into thirds. Shape each third into a 15-inch loaf (baguette) or a 5-inch round on greased baking sheets. Cover loosely with greased plastic wrap; let rise until double in size (about 30 minutes).

Heat oven to 400 F. Stir together egg and milk in small bowl; brush over top and sides of loaves. Make 5 diagonal slashes across top of each loaf with serrated knife or razor blade. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from baking sheets; cool on wire racks.

Crusty French Bread in a Power Mixer

2 packages dry active yeast

2 1/2 cups warm water (105 to 115 F)

1 tablespoon salt

1 tablespoon unsalted butter or margarine, melted

7 cups unbleached all-purpose flour*

3 tablespoons cornmeal

1 egg white

1 tablespoon cold water

*can substitute up to half with whole wheat flour

Dissolve yeast in warm water in warmed mixer bowl (fill it with warm water and let it sit for a few minutes then empty before starting). Add salt, butter, and flour. Using dough hook, mix on low speed until well blended, about 1 minute. Knead on same speed (depending on your mixer) for 2 minutes. Dough will be sticky, but do not add extra flour. Place in a greased bowl, turning to grease top. Cover with plastic wrap, then a heavy towel. Place in draft-free area and let rise until doubled, about 1 hour.

Punch dough down and divide in half. Roll each half into a 12 x 15-inch rectangle. Tightly roll each rectangle, from longest side, tapering ends and folding ends under slightly. Pinch seams to seal. Place loaves, seam side down on greased baking sheets which have been

dusted with cornmeal, being certain to leave enough space between the loaves for additional rising. Cover the loaves with plastic wrap and towel; let rise in draft-free area until doubled, about 1 hour.

With a sharp knife or a clean razor blade, make 4 diagonal cuts on top of each loaf. Bake in preheated 450° F oven for 25 minutes. Meanwhile, make egg wash by beating together the egg white and water. Remove loaves from oven; brush tops with egg wash. Return to oven and bake 5 minutes longer. Remove from baking sheet and cool on wire racks.