

French bread

Combine:

2½ C warm water (around 105° F)

4 t sugar

5 t yeast (I prefer SAF brand found at Smart and Final)

Let sit 5-10 minutes or until bubbly.

Then add:

2 T olive oil

1 T salt

7 C flour

Knead for 6-8 minutes in a Kitchen Aid or similar mixer (I use a Bosch Universal) or 8-10 minutes by hand.

Let rise in bowl until doubled in size (about 1 hour).

Punch dough down.

Divide dough in half. Put dough on floured surface and let rest for 10 minutes.

While the dough is resting, grease a French bread pan and sprinkle with cornmeal. If you don't have a French bread pan, just use a 9x13 cake pan and lay your loaves side by side. The shape will be different but it will still taste yummy.

Shape into French bread shape. I do this by rolling out each ball of dough until flattened then rolling it up and tucking in the ends. There is not really a right or wrong way to shape. Just what works for you.

Place in your prepared pan.

Cover with a towel and let rise until nearly double. About 30 minutes.

Very carefully slash the risen loaves with a very sharp knife. If you press too hard, the loaves will deflate.

Bake in a 375° F oven for 20-25 minutes or until browned.

Remove from pan to cooling rack after about 5 minutes.

Wait to cut into the loaf for at least 30 minutes. I know it is hard, but if you don't wait, the bread won't be able to stand up to the pressure of the knife and your bread will get squished.

If you divide the recipe in half and make a single loaf, you can use a bread machine to knead the dough and then remove it to bake in the traditional oven.