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Easy, No-Knead Artisan Baguettes

Makes 2 small loaves

Fresh baguettes are within reach more easily than you might think! Using a stand mixer the mixing is easy – just four ingredients! Once mixed, the delicious flavor develops over time with the natural rising and deflating cycle of the dough. After the first rise, the dough can live happily in the refrigerator for up to three days before being baked. This makes these baguettes the perfect do-ahead recipe for any menu! Even if you've never made bread before, you'll find this a foolproof (and delicious!) place to start!

Ingredients:

3-1/2 cups bread flour (525 g)
1 tablespoon Kosher salt
2-1/4 teaspoons active dry yeast (1 package)
1-2/3 cups lukewarm water
1-2 tablespoons olive oil

Directions:

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer, add the bread flour, salt and dry yeast. Mix the dry ingredients on low speed (using the beater blade) until evenly combined.
2. Gradually add the lukewarm water to the dry ingredients while the mixer is running on low speed. Allow the dough to form, then switch to the dough hook. Allow the mixer to run for about five minutes scraping down the dough as necessary.
3. Pour a little of the olive oil into a large bowl. With fingertips or a paper towel, coat the inner side of the bowl with the olive. Transfer the dough from the stand mixer bowl to the oiled bowl. (The dough will be sticky in character.) Cover the bowl with plastic wrap or a silicone lid, and set aside in a draft-free, warmer location.
4. Allow the dough to rise until doubled – about 60-90 minutes. Deflate the dough, and allow to rise again until doubled – it will happen faster the second time around. Deflate the dough, cover and place the bowl in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours, or until ready to bake, or up to 3 days.
5. When ready to bake, prepare the baguette pan by oiling the inner surface of the pan with a paper towel soaked with olive oil. Remove the dough from the bowl and place on a working surface. With a knife or dough cutter, divide the dough in half. You'll find the chilled dough easier to handle than when the dough was just mixed.

Continued on Page 2



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Page 2, continued

6. Form two loaves by rolling and shaping into a long log about 2 -2.5 inches in diameter and about 12-14 inches in length. Place each dough log in the baguette pan stretching and cajoling the dough so that it is as even as possible. The ends can sometimes get a little narrow and pointy, just tuck them under if necessary. To keep the dough from sticking to your fingers, use a bit of olive oil on your hands for easier handling. Allow the loaves to rise for 30 minutes in the pan.

7. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 400°F. When the loaves have risen and are ready to bake, (they will increase in size during baking), make 3-4 long, diagonal slashes across the top of the loaves with a very sharp knife, a lamé, or with kitchen scissors. Take care not to deflate the loaves during the slashing and brushing steps.

8. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until the loaves are lightly browned and the inner temperature of the loaf reaches 185°F. If the ends of the baguettes are browning more quickly than the center portion, tent a small piece of aluminum foil over the ends of the baguette pan.

9. Remove the loaves from the oven to a cooling rack. After about 5 minutes, remove the loaves from the pan and allow to continue cooling. Serve warm for maximum enjoyment with your best butter or olive oil. Tear chunks from the loaf, or use a serrated knife to cut slices. You'll find that homemade baguettes made the best crostini!