**French baguette, homemade**

Mix time: 30 min

Dough Prep Time: 1.5 hrs

Cold retarding: 12 hrs

Second rise: 3hrs

Shaping and proofing: 3 hrs

Cook Time: 25-30 min

Servings: 12

Calories: 158kcal

Ingredients

* 3 ½ cups / 500 g bread flour King Arthur brand (+12% gluten), using 'scoop and swipe' method
* 1 ½ cups + 1 Tbsp / 360 g water
* 2 tsp / 10 g salt about
* 1 tsp / 3 g instant yeast; also known as Quick Rise or Rapid Rise yeast
* 1 Tbsp / 25 g honey

Instructions

1. Mix:
   1. Mix all ingredients in a bowl and let rest for 15 min. Cover with a plastic wrap at altitude.
2. Dough:
   1. Stretch and cover in plastic wrap to activate in a warm place. Do 3 sets of stretch and folds over 1 1/2 hrs. Stretch after rest and twice more at 30 min intervals. Flip the dough upside down after each stretch set. Locate in warm place at least 75F.
3. Rising and retarding:
   1. The dough is active. Keep covered with a plastic wrap and place in refrigerator overnight for +/-12 hours (cold retarding). Longer is OK, up to 36hrs (maybe). Dough will be bubbly, have a doughy smell and approximately double in size.
4. Shaping and Proofing:
   1. After cold retarding in fridge, remove and let warm up 2-4 hrs in a warm place at least 75F. The dough should be more than twice the size and have big bubbles. Place in front of fire to warm up if cold room, turning the bowl every 30 -60 min to warm evenly.
   2. Flour a work surface with 50/50 rice/bread flour mixture. Very gently, turn the dough to shape and divide into 3 equal parts. With a light touch and lightly floured, shape thirds into approximately 8”x 5” rectangles. Cover in plastic wrap and let rest for 30 min.
   3. Using only your hands, very gently stretch each dough rectangle and fold 3 times to create a cylinder, sealing each fold seam. Gently roll and stretch the cylinders to about 14-15 inches.
   4. Prep a floured couche with same 50/50 flour mixture so each dough cylinder will be completely covered by couche.
   5. Place each dough cylinder on the couche with the seam side up. Cover each dough cylinder in couche, tucking in the edges so each cylinder is covered snuggly. Cover the couche in plastic wrap at high altitude (plastic not needed at sea level)
   6. Proof for 1-2 hrs in a warm place, near the pre-heating oven or in front of a fire at high altitude until sufficiently proofed. Test by confirming dough is springy from a light touch. If not springy, continue to proof.
5. Preheat Oven:
   1. Start preheating the oven to 500F (or 450F at altitude), with a baking stone positioned on the upper half the oven.
   2. Humidity is critical so place a towel in a bread pan, fill it with hot water and place on the bottom rack. Make sure the water does not evaporate too much before you are ready to bake. Needs at least 30min of heating time to fully steam oven.
   3. Use a spray bottle with filtered water and food grade spray bottle to add steam when the door is opened. Have your water spray bottle handy to shoot water into the bottom of the oven to maintain humidity each time the door is opened.
6. After Proofing:
   1. Transfer the baguettes to parchment paper, seam side down and dust off excess flour.
   2. Using a bread lame, a sharp knife or a razor blade, make 3 scores on each baguette. When scoring, cut at a 45 deg. angle using a swift firm motion to ensure nice, clean cuts.
7. Cooking:
   1. When opening the oven use caution not to burn your face by steam.
   2. Slide the parchment paper with baguettes off and onto the baking stone. Close the oven and reduce temperature:
      1. 475F at sea level
      2. 425F at altitude
   3. Add a few shots of spray water to steam up again before closing the oven.
   4. Bake for 15 minutes.
   5. Rotate the baguettes and drop temperature to:
      1. 450F at sea level
      2. 400F at altitude and shoot in a few spay shots to maintain steam.
   6. Continue baking for another 12-15 minutes or until deep golden brown.

Note: The author of this recipe is a French baguette expert and highly recommends to measure out the ingredients using a kitchen scale, which is an inexpensive scale. Even though the measurements are provided in U.S. units, they are imprecise and results may vary. Additionally, measuring flour in cups does not take into account the flour's hydration, which is influenced by how fresh the flour is and how it was stored. This is why it should be fluffed and measured with the scoop and swipe method.