

French Baguette

Learn to make authentic French baguettes with this classic recipe. Crusty exterior, soft interior using simple ingredients and traditional techniques.

11h

PREP

40 min

COOK

11h 40min

TOTAL

2

SERVINGS

Hard

DIFFICULTY

French Baguette

Ingredients

- 60 g flour
- 160 g water
- 1 tsp yeast
- 1 tsp salt

Instructions

- 1 Make the polish**

Combine 60g flour, 60ml lukewarm water (32°C/90°F), and a pinch of the instant yeast in a large bowl. Whisk until smooth and no lumps remain. Cover with plastic wrap and let ferment at room temperature for 8-12 hours until bubbly and doubled in size.
- 2 Form the dough**

Add 160g flour, 160ml water, and 1 tsp salt to the polish. Mix with your hands until no dry flour remains and a shaggy, sticky dough forms, about 2-3 minutes.
- 3** Cover the bowl and rest for 30 minutes. Wet your hands, grab one side of the dough, stretch it upward and fold it over the center. Rotate the bowl 90 degrees and repeat on all four sides to complete one set of folds.
- 4** Cover and rest for 30 minutes, then repeat the folding process. Continue this cycle 3 more times for a total of 4 fold sets with 30-minute rests between each, until the dough feels smooth and slightly elastic.
- 5 Prepare for baking**

Place a cast iron skillet on the bottom oven rack and a baking stone on the middle rack. Preheat the oven to 260°C/500°F for 1 hour. Line a pizza peel with parchment paper.
- 6 Shape the baguettes**

Divide the dough into 2 equal pieces on a lightly floured surface. Press each piece into a 20x10cm (8x4-inch) rectangle. Fold the top edge down 1cm and seal with your fingertips, then continue folding and sealing to form a tight log with the seam on the bottom.
- 7** Roll each log with both hands to 35cm (14-inch) length, keeping the thickness even throughout. Place seam-side down on a floured kitchen towel with the towel edges folded up to support the shape. Cover with plastic wrap and proof for 45-60 minutes until doubled in size.

8 Score and bake

Transfer the baguettes seam-side down to the parchment-lined peel. Using a sharp blade, score 4-5 diagonal slashes 0.5cm (1/4-inch) deep at a 45-degree angle along each baguette.

9 Slide the baguettes onto the baking stone and immediately pour 2 cups of ice cubes into the hot cast iron skillet to create steam. Reduce the oven temperature to 245°C/475°F and bake for 25-30 minutes until deep golden brown and hollow-sounding when tapped on the bottom.

10 Transfer the baguettes to a wire rack and cool for at least 45 minutes before slicing to allow the crumb to set properly.

Tips

Maintain water temperature at exactly 90°F when making the poolish—too hot kills yeast, too cold slows fermentation significantly.

Use a kitchen scale for accuracy, as proper hydration ratios are critical for authentic baguette texture and cannot be achieved with volume measurements.

Perform the windowpane test after final fermentation—properly developed dough should stretch thin enough to see through without tearing.

Score baguettes at a 45-degree angle with swift, confident cuts using a sharp blade—hesitation creates ragged edges that won't open properly.

Create maximum steam by preheating the cast iron pan for the full hour and adding ice cubes immediately after loading the bread.

Cool baguettes on a wire rack for at least 45 minutes before cutting to allow the crumb structure to set completely.

Test doneness by tapping the bottom of the baguette—properly baked bread sounds hollow when tapped.

Freeze shaped, unscored baguettes after the final rise, then bake directly from frozen, adding 5-7 minutes to the baking time.