

## Baguettes

Makes 4 baguettes

The long rising time in this recipe gives the baguettes a better texture and a more pronounced flavor.

To have fresh-baked bread whenever you want it, you can partially bake the baguettes, for about 25 minutes, until they have achieved maximum size but are not yet brown. Let the loaves cool until lukewarm, then wrap tightly and freeze. When needed, unwrap a frozen loaf, place directly on the center rack of a preheated 400-degree oven, and bake for about 20 minutes, until brown and crusty.

4½ cups bread flour, preferably organic, plus 2½ tablespoons  
for sprinkling  
1 envelope (2¼ teaspoons) active dry yeast  
2½ teaspoons salt  
2 cups cool water (70 degrees)  
2 tablespoons cornmeal

Put the 4½ cups flour, the yeast, salt, and water in the bowl of a stand mixer and mix with the dough hook on low speed for 2 to 3 minutes, or until a smooth, elastic dough forms. Alternatively, process the ingredients in a large food processor for 45 seconds.

Transfer the dough to a plastic bucket or a large deep ceramic or stainless steel bowl. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (about 70 degrees) for at least 4½ hours, or until doubled in bulk.

Break down the dough by bringing the outer edges into the center of the bowl and pressing down to release the air inside. Form the dough into a ball. Sprinkle the work surface with 2 tablespoons of the remaining flour, place the dough on top, and press down to form it into a rough rectangular shape. Cut the rectangle lengthwise into 4 equal strips. Roll each strip under your palms into an 18-inch length.

Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper or a nonstick baking mat and sprinkle with the cornmeal. Place the baguettes on the baking sheet. Let the baguettes rise, covered with an upside-down roasting pan, in a warm, draft-free place for 1 hour.

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees.

Sprinkle the tops of the risen loaves with the remaining ½ tablespoon flour. Cut 4 diagonal slits in the top surface of each loaf with a serrated knife or razor blade and place in the oven. Using a spray bottle filled with water, mist the inside of the oven

to create steam and immediately close the door. Bake the baguettes for 35 minutes, or until brown and crusty.

Cool the baguettes on a rack for at least 45 minutes before slicing.

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