

Classic Baguettes

Ingredients

Starter (poolish)

- 1/2 cup (113g) cool water
- 1/16 teaspoon active dry yeast or instant yeast
- 1 cup (120g) all-purpose flour

Dough

- Ripened starter
- 1 1/2 teaspoons active dry yeast or instant yeast
- 1 cup + 2 tablespoons (255g) lukewarm water
- 3 1/2 cups (418g) all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons salt

Directions

Starter

1. Mix water, yeast, & flour to make a soft dough.
2. Cover and let rest at room temperature for about 14 hours.

Dough

1. Mix dough ingredients and knead in stand mixer for about 4 minutes on medium-low speed (Kitchen Aid speed 2) to make a soft, somewhat smooth dough. The finished dough should stick a bit at the bottom of the bowl.
2. Place the dough in a lightly greased medium-sized bowl, cover and let the dough rest and rise for 45 minutes.
3. Gently deflate the dough, fold its edges into the center, then turn it over in the bowl before letting it rise for another 45 minutes, until it's noticeably puffy.

Shaping

1. Turn the dough out onto a lightly greased work surface. Gently deflate it, and divide it into three equal pieces.
2. Round each piece of dough into a rough ball by pulling the edges into the center. Cover with greased plastic wrap, and let rest for at least 15 minutes (up to 1 hour).

3. Working with one piece at a time, flatten the dough slightly then fold it nearly (but not quite) in half, sealing the edges with the heel of your hand. Turn the dough around, and repeat: fold, then flatten. Repeat this whole process again; the dough should have started to elongate itself.
4. With the seam side down, cup your fingers and gently roll the dough into a 16" loaf (they will shrink a bit after sitting). Taper each end slightly.
5. Place loaves seam-side down onto a lightly greased or parchment-lined sheet pan or pans, into the folds of a heavily floured couche or cotton dish towel.
6. Cover with lightly greased plastic wrap, and let rise for about 1 hour, until slightly puffy.

Baking

1. Towards the end of the rising time, preheat oven to 450°F & place a cast iron pan on the floor or lowest rack of the oven. If using a baking stone, place it on a middle rack. Boil 1 1/2 cups of water.
2. If baguettes have risen in a couche or dish towel, gently roll them (seam side down) onto a lightly greased or lined baking sheet. If using a baking stone, roll them onto a piece of parchment, and lift the parchment onto a baker's peel.
3. Using a baker's lame or a very sharp knife held at about a 45° angle, make three to five long lengthwise slashes in each baguette.
4. Load the baguettes into the oven. If baking on a stone, use a baker's peel to transfer the baguettes, parchment and all, onto the hot stone. Carefully pour the boiling water into the cast iron pan, and quickly shut the oven door. The billowing steam created by the boiling water will help the baguettes rise, and give them a lovely, shiny crust.
5. Bake for 24 to 28 minutes, until very deep golden brown.
6. Remove from the oven and cool on a rack. Or, for extra crisp crust, turn off the oven, open door about 2", and allow the baguettes to cool completely in the oven, until both baguettes and oven are at room temperature.
7. Store any leftover baguettes in a paper bag overnight; freeze for longer storage. Thaw and reheat just before serving.