



















French Country Bread in One Day

Ingredients

400 g Bread flour 
300 g Water
3 g Active dry yeast 
4 g Salt 
20 g Sugar 
- Cornmeal, as needed 

Equipment

Liquid measuring cup 
Digital scale 
Wooden spoon 
Large bowl 
High-quality plastic wrap 
Kitchen towels 
Bowl scraper 
Banneton (8.5 inch) 
Breville Smart Oven® Air 
Parchment paper 
13" Pizza stone for Smart Oven
Air 
4 qt Staub cocotte (optional) 
Serrated bread knife 

Timing

10 minutes active; 6 hours total

Yield

1 loaf

1 Gather your ingredients

You can try this recipe with any flour you have at hand. However, the higher the protein content of the flour, the chewier the bread.

2 Activate the yeast

Dissolve the sugar and yeast in warm tap water (about 90 °F / 32 °C). Let the yeast rest for about 20 minutes or until you see the yeast begin to bubble up and get to work.

Your yeast is ready when it looks like this

3 Then add the yeast mixture to the flour

Pour the liquid yeast mixture right into the flour in a large bowl.

Add the salt

Since salt can thwart the growth of yeast, add it here, after the yeast has fully proofed.

Mix the dough

The dough will be wet when you are done stirring. See that photo below? We want the dough to look like that.

4 g Salt 

4 Cover and let rest

Cover the bowl with cling film, then place a dish towel on top. Let the dough rest. It is optimal to let this dough rest for 24 hours if you can plan ahead. However, you can also let the dough rest for 16 hours, 12 hours, all the way down to 4 hours. Know this: the longer the dough rests, the chewier the final bread will be and the larger the bubble structure or crumb will be.

After 24 hours, it should look like this

5 Get ready to shape the bread dough

Pour the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface.

Portion, if needed

If you are doing a double batch or larger, this is when you portion out the dough. Use a bench scraper or a large knife.

Shape your dough

This is where you will fold the dough onto itself like an envelope. Pull the edge of the dough out, then fold it onto the loaf. You can get away with a few folds at a time before the dough will need to rest, as the gluten will tighten up as you handle it. You can fold the dough a few times in one round, and then move on, or you can fold many times in many rounds, which will develop the large bubbles and lacy texture you look for in a classic country loaf.

6 Prep a banneton

You can use the same flour you used to dust your surface for the dough to dust your banneton. I suggest hitting it with a bit of cornmeal afterward. A lot of bakers prefer brown rice flour here, as it will do a better job of staying dry, which will help your dough to release from the banneton later. So, if you have brown rice flour, go ahead and use it here. Otherwise, use what you have. A bit of cornmeal works well.

Whaaaaat? You don't have a banneton?

Okay, okay. You don't have a banneton? No worries.

Use a large bowl, a large measuring vessel, or even a pot. Line it with linen and flour it just the same as you would for the banneton. Try to find a vessel that will develop the shape of a boule.

7 Get the dough into the banneton

You folded your dough a few times, or maybe a lot more. But now you need to get it into the banneton to rest. The main thing you want to strive for here is to get the smooth side of the dough facing down, with your folds facing up. This way you will have a more predictable oven spring surface when the dough bakes and your folds are less likely to come undone.

It should look like this

Hit your dough with more of your dusting mix, whether it is cornmeal or brown rice flour.

8 Proof the dough

Now your dough needs to proof for a bit. You can proof at room temperature for a few hours or you can proof the dough in the refrigerator for up to 24 hours. The longer the proofing, the more developed the flavor and final texture will be. So look at your schedule, listen to your gut, and decide whether or not you want to bake this thing later today or tomorrow

Make sure you cover it

You do not want the surface of your bread to dry out, so cover it while it's proofing. If you go the route of proofing for another day in the refrigerator, wrap the bowl with cling film to make sure it's really protected.

9 Preheat your oven to 482 °F / 250 °C

This is very important. To maximize your bread's texture potential, you want a thoroughly preheated oven.

Dutch oven or a baking stone?

If you have a Dutch oven with a lid, use it to bake this bread. This container will promote a more even bake and a more evenly colored crust. In the image below, the loaf on the left was baked inside a Dutch oven, whereas the loaf on the right was baked without, which left it exposed to the countertop oven elements.

10 Time to transfer the dough!

All this is much easier if you make a makeshift pizza peel. Cut some cardboard and some baking paper into large enough squares to hold the base of your dough.

Place the baking paper on the dough

Add the cardboard

Press the cardboard onto the banneton

Then, flip it over

And, carefully remove your banneton. Voilà!

11 Baking—here is the game plan

Bake the bread—part one

Lower the preheat temperature and set the oven to 446 °F / 230 °C. Place the dough into the cast iron pot and bake with the lid on for 25 minutes.

Spray some water into the pot (about eight squirts), then quickly put the lid back on to trap the steam that will form.

Baking the bread—part two

Change the oven temp to 374 °F / 190 °C.

Remove the lid from the pot and bake the bread for another 15 to 20 minutes.

12 Let cool to slice

It is so hard to resist slicing into that bread right away. However, if you want that nice sliceable loaf and that epic crumb shot for Insta, you're going to want to let the dough cool completely.

Wait an hour before slicing and your bread will be beautiful.

Now, dig in.

This recipe made faster at a glance

If you let the dough ferment 1 hour, instead of overnight then, shape and place right into the banneton to proof - for another 3 hours. The results may be similar to the images below. The crumb structure will be much finer and, the dough will brown a bit faster as it is less acidic at this stage and the flavor will be milder. Totally fine bread and pretty darn rustic, but not quite the fluffy airy loaf you think of when you want French country loaf.

Want bread faster or easier breads to make, look no further.

Want to know how baking really works, here you go!