

Slow Room Temp-Fermented Rustic French Loaf Recipe (total time \approx 7 hours).

Makes 1 x 2.2 lb (1kg) Round Loaf - This recipe makes excellent baguettes as well.

Measuring by weight is far more accurate than measuring by volume. If you are serious about baking and want to produce consistently excellent products, a scale remains your best friend. For professional bakers only: Desired Dough Temperature (DDT): 166°F (75°C).

Recipe

1.7 cups (420ml) tap or spring water at 90°F (32°C)

2 cups (300g) unbleached bread flour

2 cups (300g) unbleached all-purpose flour

1 tsp (5g) malted barley flour or 1/2 tsp (2.5g) molasses

1/2 packet (3g) RapidRise yeast, instant yeast or (5g) fresh yeast*

2.8 tsp (13g) salt

Flour and fine semolina for dusting.

*RapidRise and Bread Machine are different strains than Active Dry Yeast. RapidRise is grown with a higher level of nutrients and is dried to lower moisture content. The particle size of RapidRise is finely granulated to allow complete hydration of the yeast cells during the mixing process. The Active Dry Yeast larger particle size should be dissolved in water to achieve complete hydration prior to adding to the mixer. In addition, RapidRise yeast contains ascorbic acid resulting in increased loaf volumes. In bread making fresh yeast is the best option but it has a short shelf life.

One of the most important skills a baker should learn is the ability to accurately control dough temperature. The benefits are clear and immediate: more consistency in fermentation, in bread flavor and color. To make bread, the ideal temperature of your kitchen should be between 71°F and 75°F (21°/24°C).

In general, wheat-based doughs should be between 75°F and 78°F (24°/26°C) at the end of mixing time. This recipe calls for warmer temperature though: 83°F (28/29°C).

Follow this useful example and you will get there.

1. Air temperature and flour: 72°F (22°C)
2. Temperature of the water: 90°F (32°C)
3. The "friction factor" of hand mixing \approx 35.5°F (2°C).

Rustic French Loaf / Baking & Storing

Position rack in the lower third of conventional oven or on baking setting only. Preheat oven to 500°F (260°C).

For best results preheat oven for 30 minutes with an upside-down baking tray or a pizza stone in your oven to create more thermal mass. Carefully slide bread onto the hot baking tray or stone and bake your round loaf for 15 minutes then lower temperature to 450°F (230°C) continue baking for 40 minutes more. During the last 10 minutes of baking, turn oven off and crack open the oven door. Total baking time: 55 minutes.

Steam: To get the most volume from your bread, you need to slow down the formation of the crust the slower the crust forms, the more time the dough has to expand by adding steam to the oven. To do so, place a cast-iron pan or griddle on the floor of the oven when you preheat it. As soon as you put the bread in the oven, toss a few ice cubes (about 6) into the preheated cast-iron pan and immediately close the door.

Wait for the bread to cool completely before cutting into it. The flavor and texture continue to develop as the bread cools. Store loaf or miche at room temperature for up to 3 days wrapped in a dry clean towel.

To freeze: wrap fresh portioned bread tightly in foil, place in a freezer bag, and freeze. Thaw the unwrapped loaf at room temperature or in a 450°F (230°C) preheated oven for 5 minutes. Remove from the oven and let loaf to rest 10 minutes on the counter before eating. Note that reheated bread don't last.