

Italian Bread

Ingredients:

- 1 package active dry yeast
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons warm water (105f to 115f)
- 3 cups bread flour
- 1 teaspoon salt

Method:

Stir the yeast and sugar into the warm water and let stand about 5 minutes until mixture is foamy.

Put the bread flour and salt into a large mixing bowl and make a well in the center. Pour the yeast mixture into the center and stir to form a soft dough. When the dough is well mixed, turn in onto a floured board. Knead 8 to 10 minutes until it is smooth, supple, and elastic. return the dough to the bowl, cover with a damp cloth, and let rest in a warm spot about 1 hour until the dough has doubled in volume.

Punch down the dough and knead it several times to remove the air. Divide dough in half and shape each half into a 12 inch long loaf. Carefully place each loaf on a separate greased baking sheet. Cover with a damp cloth and let rest in a warm spot 35 to 50 minutes until loaves have doubled in size.

Fifteen minutes before baking, preheat oven to 425f.

When the loaves have doubled, make 3 evenly spaced diagonal slashes across the top. Place in the heated oven and bake 25 to 30 minutes until the loaves are golden and sound hollow when tapped on the bottom.

Transfer to wire rack and cool completely.

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