Easy French Bread

Makes one loaf

2 1/4-2 3/4 cups flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon sugar
1 pkg. (2 1/4 teaspoons) active dry yeast
1 cup warm water (120°F)

In the bowl of a standing mixer, combine 1.5 cups flour with the salt, sugar, and yeast. Add water and beat for 3 minutes. Beat in enough additional flour to make a soft but kneadable dough.

Turn dough out onto floured surface and knead 3-5 minutes, or until smooth and elastic.

Place in bowl, cover with tea towel, and let rise 45 minutes (an hour if your house is cold).

Punch dough down and roll into a long rectangular shape. Starting from the long end, roll up jelly-roll style. Place seam-side down on a greased baking sheet, cover with a wet tea towel, and let rise 30-45 minutes, or until doubled. How long this takes will depend on the climate of your house.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Optional: Whisk one egg white with one tablespoon of water until slightly foamy. Using a pastry brush, gently brush beaten egg white onto loaves.

Using a sharp knife, make 3-4 diagonal slashes on top of the loaf.

Bake for 15-20 minutes, or until nicely browned. Cool on a wire rack.

Notes:

- The high oven temperature is essential. Use 425°F for an even browner crust. Make sure the oven is fully heated before you bake your bread.
- This bread has very little fat/sugar, so it doesn’t keep long. Freeze what you won’t use in a day or two.

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