

## Classic Baguettes

Makes 2 baguettes

The baguette is a technically a new shape in the bread world; the long ones appeared in Paris during the 1930s in response to the public wanting more crust than crumb. The bread machine makes a French bread that is light and airy due to the mechanical action of the kneading blade, a type of mixing that just cannot be reproduced by hand. It also enables the dough to stay moister, thus giving a thin, crisp crust. This is a classic French baguette adapted from a Joe Ortiz recipe designed for the food processor which is incredibly good for a bread machine mixed-home oven baked version. You must have a baguette tray to make the loaves; they are too soft to stand on their own on a baking sheet. I love how long and thin the baguettes are after they are baked in a very hot oven. And I was delighted to be able to tear into a hot loaf and have crumbs shatter on the counter. "Perfect!" exclaimed my neighbors when I brought them a still-hot wand.

### 1 1/2-and 2-pound loaves

- 1 1/2 cups water
- 3 1/4 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons gluten with powdered vitamin C added
- 1 3/4 teaspoons salt
- 2 1/2 teaspoons bread machine yeast

1. Place all the ingredients in the pan according to manufacturer's instructions. Program for the Dough cycle; press Start. Dough ball will be sticky. Do not add any more flour at this point.
2. Grease two 18-inch long by 2-inch wide baguette tray cradles. At the end of the cycle when the dough has risen, the machine will beep. Turn off the machine, immediately remove the bread pan from the machine, and scrape the wet dough out with a dough card onto a floured work surface. Knead a few times with your dough card to incorporate just enough flour, no more than 1/4 cup, so that the dough is not in a puddle and you can shape the

loaves. You want this dough to stay as wet as possible. Divide the dough into 2 equal portions.

3. Flatten each portion into a thin 10-by-6-inch rectangle with the palm of your hand. Starting at the long end, roll each up, using your thumbs to help roll tightly. With the side of your hand, define a depression lengthwise down the center of the dough. Repeatedly fold the dough over in thirds to make a tight log and pinch seams to seal. Stretch each log by rolling it on the table back and forth with your palms a few times until about 15-inches long. Gently transfer, seam side down, to the prepared pan. Stretch the log to fit the pan, 18-inches long. No dough will hang over the ends of the pans. Cover loosely with a clean tea towel and let rise at room temperature until two and a half times its size in bulk, about 1 hour.

4. With a small, sharp knife, slash the surface 3 or 4 times on the diagonal, no more than 1/4 inch deep. This must be done gently, as the delicate dough will deflate slightly. Recover and preheat the oven to 450°, lined with a baking stone or tiles on the center rack.

5. Lightly brush the tops with cold water. Place the pan directly on the stone and bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the surface of the loaves are a deep golden brown and sound hollow when tapped with your finger. Remove the loaves from the pans immediately to a cooling rack. Eat hot or within 2 hours.