

CRUSTY FRENCH ROLLS

Here's a great time-saver: Prepare the rolls up to the baking stage a few days ahead of time. After the last rise, freeze them on the prepared baking sheet. About an hour before dinner, thaw and bake as instructed. MAKES 16 ROLLS

5 teaspoons (2 packages) active dry yeast(If you use rapid rise, use 1 ½ packs)
2 1/2 cups warm water
6 1/2 to 7 1/2 cups bread flour
1 tablespoon salt
2 tablespoons cornmeal

Make the dough: In a large mixing bowl, sprinkle yeast over water and let stand 5 minutes in a warm place. Add 4 cups flour and salt to the yeast mixture. Beat with the paddle of an electric mixer or mix by hand until a soft dough that pulls away from the sides of the bowl forms-about 10 minutes. Let the dough rest 10 minutes. With a dough hook and the mixer running, add remaining flour and knead another 5 minutes. Alternately, work the remaining flour into the dough by kneading for about 10 minutes. Add more water if necessary to form a soft, elastic dough. Form the dough into a ball and place in an oiled bowl, turning to coat all sides of dough. Cover with plastic wrap and allow dough to rise in a warm place away from drafts until doubled in bulk-up to 2 or more hours. Punch down the risen dough and re-form into a ball. Cover and allow to rise again until doubled in size-about 1 1/2 hours.

Form the rolls: Place a pan filled with hot water on the floor of the oven or on the lowest rack. Preheat the oven to 450°F. On a lightly floured surface, divide the dough into 16 equal pieces. Form each piece into an oblong shape and place on a baking pan lightly dusted with cornmeal. Loosely cover and let rolls rise for 30 minutes.

Bake the rolls: Rub a little flour over the tops of the rolls. Using a razor blade or sharp knife, make a 1/4-inch- deep slash on the top of each roll. Slide the baking sheet into the upper third of the oven and bake until dark golden brown-about 25 minutes. Transfer the rolls to a wire rack and allow to cool 10 minutes. Store in an airtight container for up to two days or freeze for up to 1 month.

Nutrition information per roll-protein: 7.2 g; fat. .76 g; Carbohydrate, 39 g; fiber: 1.6 g; sodium: 401 mg; cholesterol: 0; calories: 192.

Tips:

- If you use rapid rise yeast instead of regular use 1 ½ packs.
- If you use rapid rise yeast you will not need to let the yeast sit 5 minutes, just mix everything together and beat with paddle for 10 minutes.
- For a softer crust do not use the water bath. The rolls will still be hard on the outside, but will soften as they cool.