**French Baguettes**

**(from Zingermans)**

Poolish:

12 oz all-purpose flour

1 1/2 cups water (room temperature)

1/8 tsp instant yeast

Final Dough:

1 1/2 cups + 2 T water (room temperature)

3 1/2 cups poolish (see above)

1/2 tsp instant yeast

24 oz all-purpose flour

1 T + 1 tsp sea salt

Preheat the oven, baking stone (if using), and a cast iron skillet to 450 degrees F one hour before baking the baguettes.

Making the poolish:

1. In a mixing bowl/dough bucket, stir together the flour, water, and yeast until everything is incorporated.

2. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and allow the mix to ferment at room temperature for 12-15 hours.

Mixing the dough:

1. In a mixing bowl/dough bucket, add the water, poolish, yeast, and half of the all-purpose flour. Combine thoroughly with a wooden spoon until the ingredients are well combined. The mixture will look like a thick pancake batter.

2. Add the salt and remaining flour and stir the mixture to incorporate the dry and wet ingredients.

3. Continue mixing the dough until it becomes a shaggy mess. Scrape the side of the bowl to pick up all the bits.

4. Remove dough from the bowl.

5. Knead the dough for 5 minutes, until the dough feels like it has developed some strength.

6. Spray your mixing bowl with non-stick spray or brush with oil. Put the dough in the nixing bowl and cover with plastic.

7. Ferment for 1 hour.

8. Flour a surface. Uncover the dough and turn it onto the floured surface. Fold the dough top to bottom, bottom to top, right to left, and left to right, brushing any excess flour from each fold. Turn the dough over and return it to the oiled bowl.

9. Cover with plastic and ferment for 1 hour.

10. Lightly flour the surface and turn the dough onto the floured surface. Fold your dough again as in step #8. Leave the dough on the surface, cover with plastic, and let rest for 30 minutes.

11. With a bench scraper, dive the dough into 4 pieces.

12. Refer to sheet with pre-shape illustrations. Form the pieces of dough into ovals. Place the seam side up on a lightly floured table, and cover with plastic. Let rest for 30 minutes.

13. After 30 minutes, uncover the dough, and lightly dust the tops with flour.

14. Refer to sheet with final shape illustrations. Roll into final baguette shape, approximately 18 inches long.\* Place baguettes a well floured linen couche, seam side up, and separated by pleats, then covered with linen.\*\* Let the baguettes proof for 45 minutes to an hour at room temperature. Use the touch test to see if the dough is ready for the oven (approximately 2/3 return of touch).

15. When ready to bake, use a transfer peel to transfer the baguettes to a piece of parchment paper. Use a lâme or a very sharp knife to scare each baguette with 6-7 cuts, then use a pizza peel to slide the baguettes onto the preheated baking stone.

16. Bake the baguettes with plenty of steam\*\*\* for 8 minutes, then for an additional 6-10 minutes, or until golden brown.

17. Remove from the oven, place on a cooling rack, and cool completely before eating.

\*You can make 8 smaller baguettes instead.

\*\*If you do not have a linen couche, place the shaped baguettes not a parchment lined sheet tray and cover with plastic.

\*\*\*To steam in your home oven, place a cast iron skillet on the bottom of your oven, and preheat the skillet, oven, and baking stone for 1 hour. When ready to bake, place the baguettes onto the baking stone or place the baking sheet of baguettes in the oven. Add 1/2 cup water to the skillet and immediately close the door. Bake for 8 minutes, open the oven door to release the steam, and then continue to bake until golden brown.

Yield: 4 full baguettes