

Crusty Italian Bread

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makes 2 loaves

1 1/3 cups warm water

2 1/4 teaspoons yeast

1 Tablespoon brown sugar

1 1/2 teaspoons salt

1 1/2 teaspoons olive oil

4 cups flour

Directions:

Place warm water, yeast and brown sugar in mixing bowl. Stir and let stand for a few minutes until it start to bubble and foam a bit.

Add olive oil and salt. Mix and add the flour gradually. You want to add enough that the dough comes away from the sides of the bowl. You want to mix it with the dough hook for a few minutes.

Cover and let the dough rise until doubled about 30 minutes.

Punch down dough and divide in two and form into two loaves (I doubled the recipe this time.)

Cover with a damp cloth and let rise until doubled.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Beat together:

1 egg

1 Tablespoon water

Brush the risen loaves with the egg mixture.

Make a single long quick cut down the center of the loaves with a sharp knife.

Now here's the secret. Place atleast 1 cup hot water in a shallow pan and place it on the rack underneath the bread.

The steam will make the crust turn perfectly. You may need to add a bit more water during cooking. You do not want it to evaporate.

Bake for 25-30 minutes or until the loaves turn golden brown

and sound hollow when you tap them.

Remove from pan and let cool on racks. I always like to rub butter over the hot crust!

Source : allrecipes.com