

Crusty French Bread

1 package (1/4 ounce) active dry yeast
1-1/2 cups warm water (110° to 115°), divided
1 tablespoon sugar
2 teaspoons salt
1 tablespoon shortening, melted
4 to 5 cups all-purpose flour
Cornmeal

In a large bowl, dissolve yeast in 1/2 cup water. Add the sugar, salt, shortening, remaining water and 3-1/2 cups flour. Beat until smooth. Stir in enough remaining flour to form a soft dough. Do not knead. Cover and let rise in a warm place for 1 hour or until doubled.

Turn onto a floured surface. Divide in half; let rest for 10 minutes. Roll each half into a 10 x 8-in. rectangle. Roll up from a long side; pinch to seal. Place seam side down on greased [baking sheets](#) sprinkled with cornmeal.

Sprinkle the tops with cornmeal. Cover and let rise until doubled, about 45 minutes. With a very sharp knife, make 5 diagonal cuts across the top of each loaf.

Bake at 400° for 20-30 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove from pans to wire rack to cool.