

## To Make French Bread the Best Way

**The original recipe from Robert May's 1685 cookbook, "The Accomplisht Cook, or the Art and Mystery of Cookery"**

*Take a gallon of fine flour, and a pint of good new ale barm or yeast, and put it to the flour, with the whites of six new laid eggs well beaten in a dish, and mixt with the barm in the middle of the flour, also three spoonfuls of fine salt; then warm some milk and fair water, and put to it, and make it up pretty stiff, being well wrought and worked up, cover it in a bough or tray with a warm cloth till your oven be hot; then make it up either in roulds, or fashion it into little wooden dishes, and bake it, being baked in a quick oven, chip it hot.*

barm: the foam that forms on top of beer when it is fermenting

well wrought and worked up: Kneading, including pushing and pulling the dough as well as lifting the dough off of the floured surface and "crashing" it back down

chip it hot: remove from the pan or baking surface while it is still hot

### **A modern interpretation of the recipe by Anne Jacob:**

#### *Ingredients*

2 egg whites

3-4 cups all-purpose flour

1 (1/4 oz) package dry yeast

1 T. sugar

1 t. salt

½ Cup hot (115-120 degrees) water

½ Cup warm milk

1 teaspoon butter

Cooking spray

Beat egg whites until stiff. Set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, Dissolve the yeast with the hot water and add the sugar and salt.

Add the milk and 2 cups of the flour. Beat about 50 strokes with a strong mixing spoon.

Fold in the egg whites until they are absorbed by the dough.

Add flour, ¼ cup at a time, until the mixture is soft and no longer moist.

Lift the dough out of the bowl onto a lightly floured surface, adding a little more flour if the dough is too sticky. Knead for about 10 minutes, adding flour as needed and making sure it is "well wrought and worked up."

Place the dough into a bowl greased with butter, rinse a clean dish towel in very warm water and wring it out. Cover the bowl with the warm towel.

Let the dough rise about an hour, or until it is almost doubled in size.

Preheat the oven to 350.

*Modern hint: for a crisper crust, carefully place a small pan of boiling water in the bottom of the oven.*

Coat a baking pan with cooking spray or lightly grease the pan.

Roll balls of dough or make two long loaves and place them in the pan, making sure that the edges are not touching.

Bake 20-30 minutes until crust is golden brown. Remove from the pan immediately after taking the bread out of the oven.