Homemade Crusty Bread

Prep Time 20 minutes	**Rising Time** 2-3 hours
Cooking Time 25-30 minutes	**Yield** 1 large loaf or 2 medium loaves

Ingredients - U.S. Measurements

- 4 cups (500 g) all-purpose or bread flour, plus extra for kneading
- 1 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 packet (2 1/4 tsp or 7 g) active dry yeast
- 1 1/2 cups (375 ml) warm water, about 110°F/43°C
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) olive oil
- 1 tsp sugar

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Activate the Yeast:

In a small bowl, combine the warm water, sugar, and yeast. Let it sit for 5-10 minutes until frothy. This ensures the yeast is active.

2. Mix the Dough:

In a large mixing bowl, combine the flour and salt. Create a well in the center and pour in the yeast mixture and olive oil. Stir with a wooden spoon until the mixture begins to come together.

3. Knead the Dough:

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead for 8-10 minutes until smooth and elastic. If the dough is sticky, sprinkle a little more flour as needed, but do not overdo it.

4. First Rise:

Place the dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover with a damp cloth or plastic wrap, and let it rise in a warm, draft-free spot for 1 1/2-2 hours, or until doubled in size.

5. Shape the Dough:

Punch down the dough to release air. Shape it into a loaf or divide it into two smaller loaves, rolls, or your desired bread form. Place the dough on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper or in a greased loaf pan.

6. Second Rise:

Cover the dough loosely with a towel and let it rise again for 30-45 minutes, until puffed up.

7. Bake:

Preheat your oven to 425°F (220°C). For a crustier loaf, place an oven-safe dish of water on the lower rack. Bake for 25-30 minutes, or until the bread is golden brown and sounds hollow when tapped on the bottom.

8. Cool:

Let the bread cool on a wire rack before slicing.

For best texture, let the loaf cool fully before slicing.