



Fastest French Croutons

By Erin Fletter

Prep Time 20 / **Cook Time** 15 / **Serves** 4 - 6

Fun-Da-Mentals Kitchen Skills

bake: to cook food with dry heat, as in an oven.

rest (dough): to let bread or pastry dough relax, allowing the dough to absorb more liquid and become more pliable before shaping it.

shape: to form food into a specific shape by hand or with a cutting tool—examples are cutting cookie dough into shapes with cookie cutters, forming bread dough into a roll or crescent shape, and rolling ground meat into a meatball.

Equipment

- Oven
- Baking sheet or mini-muffin pan
- Mixing bowls
- Measuring cups
- Measuring spoons

Ingredients

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- 1/4 C warm water
- 2 1/2 T butter, at room temperature ******(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub dairy-free/nut-free butter, like Earth Balance brand OR olive oil)******
- 1 T active dry yeast
- 2 T granulated sugar

- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 egg ******(for EGG ALLERGY sub 1 1/2 T vegetable oil + 1 1/2 T water + 1 tsp baking powder)******
- 1 3/4 C all-purpose flour ******(for GLUTEN ALLERGY sub gluten-free/nut-free all-purpose flour)******
- 1/2 C grated Parmesan cheese ******(for DAIRY ALLERGY sub 2 T nutritional yeast)******
- 2 T chopped fresh chives or parsley, optional
- cooking spray or oil to grease pan

Food Allergen Substitutions

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Dairy: Substitute dairy-free/nut-free butter, like Earth Balance brand OR olive oil. For 1/2 C grated Parmesan cheese, substitute 2 T nutritional yeast.

Egg: For 1 egg, substitute 1 1/2 T vegetable oil + 1 1/2 T water + 1 tsp baking powder.

Gluten/Wheat: Substitute gluten-free/nut-free all-purpose flour.

Instructions

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intro

A crouton is a seasoned fried or toasted bread cube added to salads and soups for texture. The word comes from the French "croûton," which can also mean "crust."

combine + rest

In a medium mixing bowl, have kids measure and combine **1/4 cup warm water**, **2 1/2 tablespoons room temperature butter**, **1 tablespoon active dry yeast**, and **2 tablespoons sugar**. Allow the mixture to rest for 8 to 10 minutes, while the yeast wakes up!

scrumptious science

Even though yeast looks like large grains of sand, it is actually a living organism. Yeast is a label broadly used to describe about 1,500 different kinds of fungi. This means that yeast makes up about one percent of the fungus you would come across in the world. The type we are using today is called active dry yeast. It means that the yeast is alive but sleeping in its container. To "wake up" the yeast, you will need to feed it its favorite breakfast: sugar! Once the yeast begins eating the sugar, it creates a byproduct: carbon dioxide. (I like to think of the yeast as burping little, itty bitty burps from eating the sugar too fast!) This carbon dioxide will later be trapped inside the crouton dough you are creating in this recipe, which is super important for making a light texture.

crack + whisk + add

Crack **1 egg** and whisk into the yeast mixture. If using, add **1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese** and **2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives or parsley**.

preheat + mix + count

Preheat your oven to 400 F. Measure and mix together **1 3/4 cups flour** and **1/2 teaspoon salt** in a small mixing bowl. Add the flour mixture 1/2 cup at a time to the wet ingredients and mix well until a dough is formed. Count to 5 in French while mixing: 1 un (uhn), 2 deux (deuh), 3 trois (twah), 4 quatre (KAH-truh), 5 cinq (sank).

shape + rest

Kids can shape the dough into 12 to 18 small balls and let them rest for at least 5 and up to 20 minutes—the longer the dough rests, the more it will rise!

bake + serve

Place the dough balls on a greased baking sheet or mini-muffin pan and bake for 15 minutes or until the tops are just golden brown. Serve with salad or soup, like **Very "Vichyssoise" Potato Leek Soup!**

Featured Ingredient: Baker's Yeast!

Hi! I'm Baker's Yeast!

"Did you know that I'm a living organism? If you add baker's yeast to dough, it will cause your bread, cinnamon rolls, doughnuts, and more to rise up! Just add me to warm water with a little sugar (which I love to eat) and wait at least five minutes until I burp some gas bubbles (excuse me!) and get foamy at the top before adding me to your flour and other ingredients!"

Yeasts are single-celled, microscopic members of the fungus kingdom. Baker's yeast is from the species *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. It is the strain of yeast used to leaven (or raise) bread and other types of dough. It is also used in beer and winemaking.

There are several varieties of baker's yeast: active dry yeast, compressed yeast, cream yeast, deactivated yeast, instant yeast, and rapid-rise yeast. Home bakers and Sticky Fingers Cooking chef instructors generally use active dry yeast, instant yeast, or rapid-rise yeast when baking.

Active dry yeast must be activated by adding a warm liquid, like water or milk. Its granules are larger than the other dry yeasts, instant and rapid-rise, which do not have to be rehydrated (or proofed).

The word "yeast" comes from the Old English "gist," of Germanic origin, from an Indo-European root "yes-," meaning to "boil," "foam," or "bubble."

Baker's yeast has some protein, fiber, B vitamins, and potassium; however, the amount you would get from a packet of active dry yeast distributed throughout a dough would be minimal.

Nutritional yeast, a deactivated yeast, contains more protein, fiber, B vitamins, and potassium than active

dry yeast. People who eat a vegan or vegetarian diet often add nutritional yeast to foods to supplement these nutrients and add a nutty or cheesy flavor to foods.