

Cuban bread

Cuban Bread (Pan Cubano)

1 package active dry yeast
1 1/2 cups warm water (110 degrees F)
1 1/2 teaspoons granulated sugar
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon salt
3 1/4 to 3 1/2 cups bread flour
Vegetable oil (for greasing)

Sprinkle yeast over 1/2 cup of the warm water in a large mixing bowl. Add sugar, and let stand for 5 minutes. Stir in remaining 1 cup water, the olive oil and salt. Slowly add the flour, 1 cup at a time, and mix to make a dough. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and knead for about 4 minutes, or until the dough is satiny and elastic. Place dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover with plastic wrap or a damp towel, and let rise in a warm place until doubled in bulk, about 1 1/2 hours.

Punch down the dough and shape it into a 12-inch long oblong loaf. Place the loaf on a lightly greased baking sheet (or one dusted with cornmeal), cover it with a towel, and allow it to rise for 30 minutes.

Brush loaf lightly with warm water. Bake it on the baking sheet in a preheated 400 degrees F oven until it is golden brown and sounds hollow when the bottom is tapped, about 35 minutes. Remove the bread and cool it on a wire rack before serving.

Makes 1 large loaf.