

Great Garlic Bread

Garlic with butter on toasted bread: what could be better to a garlic lover? Garlic has an amazing culinary history (search online for “four thieves vinegar”) and many known health benefits (from allicin—see the note on garlic presses).

Even garlic and butter can't save subpar bread, though. Supermarket bread—the fresh-baked loaves in a chain grocery store—is never as good as a true bakery's bread. If you can, start out with amazing bread.

Mince—do not use a garlic press!—**lots of garlic**. Six cloves (4 tablespoons / 60g), or about half a garlic bulb, isn't unreasonable; true garlic lovers may want more. Transfer the garlic to a small bowl and add:

- 4 tablespoons (60g) softened or melted butter**
- 2 tablespoons (30 mL) olive oil**
- ½ teaspoon (2g) sea salt or garlic salt (omit if using salted butter)**
- 2–4 tablespoons (10–20g) chopped fresh parsley**
- 1–2 spoonfuls of red pepper flakes (optional)**

Mix ingredients to combine.

Slice a **loaf of Italian** or **French bread** in half, making a top piece and a bottom piece. Place the bread, both sides face up, on a baking sheet lined with aluminum foil. Brush or spoon the garlic mixture onto the bread. Bake the bread in a preheated oven at 350°F / 180°C for 8–10 minutes (longer if you like crispier garlic bread), and then broil until the top is golden-brown.

Notes

- *Try adding Parmesan or mozzarella cheese on top. Or use different herbs like dried oregano instead of parsley, which is traditionally used due to the misguided belief that it'll cut down on garlic body odors. You can also slice the bread or even cube it before baking.*
- *Garlic begins to brown up and toast at around 260–280°F / 125–140°C. Too brown, and it'll taste burnt. Pay attention to the garlic bits while broiling the bread.*

When should you mince garlic instead of using a garlic press?

I recommend garlic presses for convenience. Between a quick squirt of garlic or no garlic, I'll take the quick squirt. But some abhor the idea of using a garlic press because it changes the flavor of garlic—but only in some cases.

The flavor issue is caused by a heat-labile enzyme (one that breaks down when heated) in garlic, *alliinase*. When garlic is crushed, *alliinase* comes into contact with a compound, *alliin*, and converts it into another compound, *allicin*. *Allicin* isn't so great-smelling, which isn't surprising for a sulfur-based compound. At 6 seconds, half of the *alliin* is already converted to *allicin* (*alliinase* is the most abundant protein in garlic, so the rate of reaction is super fast). Slicing or mincing garlic doesn't mix the *alliin* with the *alliinase*, and once the garlic's heated, the *alliinase* can't react, so no *allicin*. The only way to avoid that reaction with a garlic press is to squirt the garlic straight into something like hot oil. If you're following a recipe that doesn't allow for that, slice or mince the garlic instead to avoid the off-tastes.

There's more to the story, though. While *allicin* doesn't smell so great, it's the only compound in garlic known to have health benefits. Sorry, folks, but without that off-odor of either raw garlic or pressed garlic left to sit around, there are no known health benefits!