

Reader's digest

A Professional Chef Reveals the Surprising (and Only) Way You Should Be Making French Toast

You haven't had French toast until you've tried it like this.

Don't settle for limp and soggy French toast when you could be devouring thick, flavorful slices that are crispy on the outside and sumptuously soft on the inside, instead. Marc Murphy, a judge on Food Network's *Chopped* and executive chef and owner of several [New York City restaurants](#) told us his secrets behind (as he calls it) "not your mama's French toast."

Ditch the fancy bread

Forget what you've heard about challah and brioche being the best French toast loaves. Yes, they're rich and delicious all on their own, but they won't stand up to the type of bread-dunking necessary to achieve a brunch-worthy French toast. "I like a crispy outside and soft, custardy inside. For that, I use a crusty bread," he says. Anything with a hard crust (like a baguette or hearty Italian) will do the trick.

Prep the night before

Nighttime prepping sounds labor intensive, but it'll actually save you time and effort the next morning when all you can think about is breaking the fast—and, it's Murphy's pro tip for achieving standout French toast. Whisk together eggs, cream, a few splashes of cognac, and vanilla extract. Then lay thick slices of bread in the mixture and soak it overnight (or for 24 hours if you have the time). "That thick bread will drink up all those ingredients and won't fall apart like white bread or challah," he says. The next morning, lay the slices on a cooking rack for 15 minutes to drain excess liquid.

Cook it two-ways

The key to a crunchy outer crust and silky soft inside is dual cooking. Dust each side of the bread with a little flour and sugar mix ("This gives it a nice crust!"), then sear it in a nonstick or cast iron pan on high heat until both sides are golden brown. Transfer to a baking sheet and pop it in a 350-degree oven for 10 to 15 minutes. "This helps it become like a custardy soufflé in the middle," says Murphy.

Don't dilly dally

"Have some respect for French toast and get your butt to the table. It's best to eat it fresh so it's still crusty," he says. Keep the garnish simple with a handful of berries or a quality maple syrup. "Take it easy with the toppings and let the French toast do the talking."