

MAKING *Hot Cross Buns!*

Makes 12 large buns or 18 / 24 minis

Ingredients - Hot cross bun recipe (amended from my blog)

500 g strong bread flour

4 g salt

120 g castor sugar

10 g instant dried yeast

1 - 2 tsp cinnamon or a combination of any spices that you enjoy - nutmeg & cloves or mixed spice would be perfect

60 g butter, very soft but not melted

2 medium eggs

260 - 280 g milk, at room temperature or warmed to approx. 30 degrees C in the microwave or on a stove [280 g will produce a softer & more sticky dough and result in softer buns]

1 tsp vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste

180 g chocolate chips (I use a combination of milk, white and dark) or dried fruits

If using dried fruits I recommend rehydrating in 150 ml boiling water for 15-20 minutes before starting the recipe.

Method

Begin by weighing the dry ingredients. If using dried fruits rehydrate in a separate bowl / container with 150ml boiling water adding a tea bag is completely optional.

In a clean mixing bowl combine the flour, sugar, cinnamon and yeast. Hold the salt for now as it can kill the yeast if it comes into direct contact.

In another bowl combine the warm milk with the eggs and vanilla. Warm milk will help to activate the yeast and begin the fermentation process. Whisk lightly to bring everything together. Pour this milk and egg mix into the flour and mix briefly to bring it all together in a clumpy mass. I normally use a wooden spoon at this point as the mix is quite sticky. Once everything is just combined I add the salt and give everything a good mixing with my hands or in a stand mixer.

This first stage of mixing will develop the gluten in the flour. Knead the sticky dough by hand or in a stand mixer for 10 - 15 minutes before adding the softened butter. The butter should be soft and able to be mixed into the dough easily. As the butter is incorporated the dough will become smooth and more elastic. Once the butter is completely incorporated transfer the dough to a lightly oiled bowl, cover loosely with cling film and place some where warm, for a short rest of about 15 minutes.

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Once the dough is rested it's time to add the dried fruits or chocolate chips (whatever additions you've selected). Lightly oil your work bench and gently pour the dough out, use your hands to stretch the dough out over the workbench as best you can. This stage will be messy and the dough may still stick, just go with it. Spread your filling ingredients evenly over the dough and firmly fold the dough over itself to combine. The dough may break and the filling may spill out, just try to collect it and place it back into the oiled bowl for the first 'bulk' rise. Gently cover the bowl with cling film and place on a warm spot for approximately an hour or until the dough has doubled in size.

When the dough is nearly doubled in volume prepare a baking tray by lightly greasing the base and sides. Dust the sides with flour, place a piece of baking paper across the base.

It's now time to gently knock the dough back, divide and shape.

Lightly oil your work bench again. My preference for rolling & shaping dough is to use either oil or water rather than dusting with flour. Adding additional flour to the recipe can make the buns tough and dense as the flour content increases in the recipe and changes the flour : moisture ratio.

Your dough should be really nice and springy now and very soft to the touch. Weigh all of the dough and divide it into 12 equal portions or simply divide the dough by sight if you don't mind more rustic looking buns. Divide the bulk amount of dough into half, divide each section into half again and finally divide each section into 3rds to create 12 buns. Lightly oil your bench again and roll these portions into tight little buns, place into your prepared baking tray for the second rise. Leave your buns in a warm place to rise by about one third this time, or for approximately 35 - 45 minutes.

If you'd prefer to bake at another time you place the covered dough into the fridge for up to 24 hours before baking.

When ready to bake: preheat oven to 180 deg C (fan forced) or 190 / 200 deg C no fan or if your oven runs cool.


Ingredients - cross paste

60 g plain flour

60 g water

Create the paste by combining the flour and water together and mixing thoroughly to create a soft paste. Transfer into a piping bag and pipe generous crosses over the buns.

Bake in the preheated oven for 25 - 28 minutes, turning halfway through the baking time. When baked the buns should be evenly risen, golden brown, smell baked and spring back when gently touched.



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Ingredients - sugar glaze

60 g castor sugar
60 g boiling water

Just before the baking time is over create the sugar glaze. Combine the castor sugar with boiling water and stir until the sugar is completely dissolved. If the sugar doesn't dissolve easily gently heat on the stove while stirring until all of the crystals dissolve the the syrup is clear.

Apply the glaze generously to the hot cross buns as soon as they are removed from the oven. Leave the buns in the baking tray for 20 - 30 minutes before removing from the tray and cooling on a wire rack - or eating fresh!

Storage

The hot cross buns are best eaten fresh or within 3 days. On day 2-3 the best way to serve is by gently toasting the split buns and serving warm with butter. Store the cooled buns covered with cling film in a cool dry place away from direct sun.

The baked buns can be frozen well. Cool completely, wrap well in cling film or seal in an airtight container similar in size to the buns. Freeze for up to 3 months.