

How to Bake Beautiful Bread

Braided Brioche

1/2 cup whole milk

1 packet instant yeast

2 1/2 ounces sugar plus a pinch

18 ounces flour

1 tsp kosher salt

Grated nutmeg, to taste

4 large eggs, lightly beaten

12 Tbsp unsalted butter, cut into tablespoons, plus more for greasing

1/2 cup sugar

1/2 cup water

Heat milk to 110°F. Add yeast and a pinch of sugar to milk, and allow to sit at room temperature for 10-15 minutes, or until foaming. Meanwhile, in the bowl of a stand mixer, combine flour, sugar, salt, and nutmeg. Affix dough hook, and add yeast mixture. Mix for 1 minute or until barely combined. Add eggs and mix on medium speed for about 5 minutes, or until the dough pulls away from the bowl of the mixer, and forms a cohesive ball. Add half the butter, and beat on medium speed for 5-7 minutes, until incorporated. Repeat with remaining butter, adding flour 1 tablespoon at a time if the dough is too sticky. Form the dough into a ball, place in a large buttered bowl, and cover with a clean kitchen towel. Place in an off oven and allow to rise for 1 hour.

To make simple syrup, combine sugar and water, and simmer until syrupy, about 15 minutes. Allow to cool completely.

Divide in half, and roll out to a 24 x 18 inch rectangle on a lightly floured surface. Roll into log lengthwise, and place in the freezer for 15 minutes, or until firm. Repeat with the other half of dough.

Remove dough rolls from the freezer, and using a bread knife, cut down the middle lengthwise, exposing all the layers. Hold the two halves of dough against each other so the cut sides are facing out, and twist into a decorative loaf. Place on parchment paper lined pan, cover with a damp towel, and allow to rise in the off oven for another hour.

Preheat oven to 375°F and bake for 30-40 minutes, or until a tester inserted into the thickest part of the loaf comes out clean. Remove from the oven, place on wire racks, and immediately brush down with simple syrup. Allow to cool for at least an hour before slicing and serving.