

BRAIDED EASTER BREAD

<http://andreasrecipes.com/2011/04/22/braided-easter-bread/>

Adapted from Ann Meyers.

Total Preparation Time: 4 hours 15 minutes

Makes 2 large loaves.

EQUIPMENT

stand mixer with paddle attachment and dough hook
large mixing bowl, lightly greased
2 baking sheets lined with parchment

INGREDIENTS

7 cups (840 g) unbleached all-purpose flour
1/2 cup (88 g) granulated sugar
4 teaspoons instant yeast
2 teaspoons salt
1/2 cup (8 tablespoons/113 g) unsalted butter, softened
2 large eggs
1-1/2 cups (360 ml) warm milk
1/2 cup (120 ml) warm water
zest of 1 lemon
1/4 teaspoon mace
1 cup (120 g) dried cherries or raisins
1 cup (112 g) chopped almonds
1 egg + 2 teaspoons cold water

GLAZE

2-1/2 cups (200 g) confectioners sugar, sifted
4 to 5 tablespoons lowfat milk
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

OPTIONAL DECORATIONS

jelly beans
mini malted eggs

Andrea Meyers – Braided Easter Bread

PREPARATION

1. In the bowl of the stand mixer, mix 4 cups of the flour, sugar, yeast, and salt, then add the softened butter and the eggs and mix until the butter is evenly distributed. Add the warm milk and water and continue mixing until it resembles a slurry. Switch to the dough hook and add the lemon zest, mace, cherries, almonds, and another cup of flour, mixing until the flour is fully incorporated. Continue adding flour 1/2 cup at a time until the dough starts to clean the sides of the bowl. Knead with the dough hook until it is smooth and elastic, about 3 to 5 minutes.
2. Transfer the dough to the greased mixing bowl and cover with a damp tea towel. Let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 90 minutes. Punch down the dough and let it rise again until almost doubled, about 30 minutes.
3. Turn out the dough onto a lightly floured surface and divide into 2 equal pieces. Set one piece aside, then divide the other into 4 equal pieces. Roll 3 of the pieces into 14-inch strands. Place them side-by-side on one of the parchment-lined baking sheets, then gently braid them, tucking the ends under. Divide the remaining piece into 3 equal pieces and braid them, then place the braid on top of the larger braid. Make another double braid with the remaining dough.
4. Cover both braids with tea towels and allow to rise until doubled, about 45 to 60 minutes.
5. Place the racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven, allow plenty of room for the breads to rise. Preheat the oven to 350° F/175° C.
6. Brush the braids with the egg and water mixture, then place in the preheated oven. After 20 minutes, move the bottom baking sheet to the top and the top baking sheet to the bottom. Continue baking until golden brown, about 15 to 20 minutes more. Remove from the oven and allow to cool completely on wire racks.
7. GLAZE: In a small mixing bowl, whisk together the confectioners sugar, milk, and vanilla extract. The glaze should be slightly thickened, not runny. Drizzle it over the cooled bread, then place a few jelly beans (optional) in the crevices of the bread, tucking them into the glaze to hold in place.