

ESB Monthly Bake - March

Easter 'Tear and Share' Cross



This Easter, make a special version of the humble hot cross bun that can double as a table centrepiece and an afternoon treat!

Ingredients and Equipment

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For the dough

1 lb 1 oz (500g) Strong White Bread Flour

A 7g packet of Easy Bake Yeast

1/2 pint (275ml) Whole Milk

2 oz (50g) cold butter, diced

3 oz (75g) caster sugar

An egg

1 1/2 tsp table salt

For the filling

2 tsps mixed spice

1 tsp each ginger and cinnamon

2oz (50g) raisins

3 tsps runny honey

3 tbsps plain flour

Equipment

A small saucepan

Two large mixing bowls

75g sultanas

A small bowl

A wooden spoon

A clean tea towel

A knife

A baking tray

Greaseproof paper

A sandwich bag

A pastry brush

An egg, beaten to glaze

How to make the bake

1. Bring the milk to the boil in a small saucepan. Remove from the heat and add the cold butter. While the milk mixture cools to room temperature, put the flour, yeast, sugar and salt in a big bowl and mix them together with a wooden spoon. (Top tip - Remember to not put the spices into the dough mix, even though they are dry ingredients as it will make the yeast work less well.) When the milk is room temperature, add the egg and milk mix to the dry ingredients and stir together to make a dry dough. Add it a bit at a time so that it can absorb into the dough. Don't be surprised if there is still some flour left in the bowl as it will be mixed into the dough when you knead it.
2. Tip out the contents of the bowl on a clean work surface and knead for 10 minutes. Although the dough starts out dry, as you knead it should become pliable and soft and springy. When the dough feels springy under your hand and isn't sticky to the touch, it's ready.
3. Grease another big bowl with soft butter. Shape the dough into a rough ball and place upside down in the bowl and cover with a clean tea towel. Leave the dough to rise for up to 2 hours until doubled in size in a warm place - e.g. next to a radiator. While the dough is proving, mix the sultanas, raisins and spices in a small bowl and line a baking tray with baking paper.
4. When the dough has risen, tip in the spice and fruit mix and knead into the dough, distributing it as well as you can. Cut the dough in two and then cut each half into 6 sections. Then roll each chunk of dough into a ball and place them on the baking tray. Place 5 buns in a vertical row with about a centimetre between them. Then add two either side horizontally to make a cross shape. Put the 5 extra buns on a tray and bake separately.
5. Cover the trays loosely again with the clean tea towel and leave to prove for 15 minutes to let them relax. While they're proofing, preheat the oven to 200°C.
6. Mix the plain flour into a paste with a tablespoon of water and put in a sandwich bag with a small snip in the corner. Make a cross with a sharp knife in the centre of each bun and fill with paste. Brush with egg around the side where the paste isn't and bake for 12 - 15 minutes. 10 minutes into baking brush with another brush of egg to make them extra shiny and bake till golden and when you tap them they sound hollow.
7. Take the buns out of the oven and brush with honey before leaving to cool on the tray. Serve with a cup of tea or as a centre piece to an Easter meal.