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Holiday Bread 'Round the World

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Holiday Breads

'Round the World



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Sweet Breads

Sweet breads are served in great variety the world over. Some are festive or for special occasions. Others are year round treats, and provide good eating anytime. Many have special significance, for special holiday observance, and have special meaning to different people.

The doughs for most breads are quite similar, they differ in shapes and flavorings. Some have raisins included, some have candied citron and cherries. Some have raisins and nuts, some contain all of these. Spices and grated rind of lemon is popular. Almonds are the most popular nuts, because they are available in most countries.

A basic sweet dough recipe, and a little imagination will create many holiday favorites for any house, for any age.

Basic Sweet Dough

1 package of yeast	1/4 cup warm water
1/2 cup milk	1/4 cup sugar
1 tsp. salt	2 3/4 - 3 cups sifted flour
2 tablespoons melted shortening	1 egg

Sprinkle yeast into warm water. Stir until dissolved. Scald milk. Pour into large mixing bowl or into large bowl of electric mixer. Add sugar, salt and shortening. Cool until just warm. Stir in 1 cup flour. Mix in dissolved yeast. Add egg and beat hard. (Egg may be beaten separately and then added to batter.) Stir in 1 1/2 cups flour, sprinkle 2 tablespoons of the remaining 1/4 cup flour on bread board or pastry cloth. Turn dough out on flour and knead, adding more flour as needed to make a soft dough. Knead until dough is smooth and satiny (about 5 minutes). Shape into smooth ball. Press top of dough ball into a lightly greased bowl, then turn dough over. Cover and let rise until doubled (about 2 hours). Punch down. Cover and let rest 5 to 10 minutes.



Hoska

3/4 cup milk	3/4 cup sugar
1/2 tsp. salt	1/2 cup butter or margarine
1/2 cup warm water	2 pkgs. or cakes yeast
2 eggs	5 1/2 cups unsifted flour (about)
1/4 cup chopped citron	1/4 cup raisins
1/4 cup chopped almonds	
Glaze	
1 egg	1 tbsp. water
1/4 cup whole blanched almonds	Yield: 2 loaves

Scald milk. Stir in sugar, salt, and margarine. Cool to lukewarm. Measure warm water into large warm bowl. Sprinkle or crumble in yeast; stir until dissolved. Stir in lukewarm milk mixture, 2 eggs and 3 cups flour. Beat until smooth. Stir in enough additional flour to make a soft dough. Turn out onto lightly floured board. Knead until smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes. Place in greased bowl, turning to grease top. Cover; let rise in warm place, free from draft, until doubled in bulk, about 50 minutes.

Punch down. Turn out onto lightly floured board. Knead in citron, raisins, and chopped almonds until well distributed. Divide into four equal pieces. Set two pieces aside. Divide one piece into three equal strips about 14 inches long. Place the three strips on a large greased baking sheet; form into a braid. Brush the top of the braid with melted margarine. Divide 2/3 of the second piece into 3 equal parts about 12 inches long. Form into a second braid and place on top of the first braid. Brush top with melted margarine. With remaining dough from second piece make a third braid about 10 inches long and place on top of second braid.

Form second loaf with reserved dough. Cover; let rise in warm place, free from draft, until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour.

Beat the 1 egg and mix 1 tbsp. water together until well blended. Brush braided loaves with egg mixture. Decorate with whole blanched almonds.

Bake in moderate oven (375 °F) about 40 minutes; loaves will be well browned.

❖ Almost all European cooks make braided loaves. Sometimes they are filled with fruit and nuts, some are served plain, some are glazed, some are frosted and sprinkled with chopped nuts. Some of the loaves are made of only two braids, one placed on top of the other. Some have layers of three and even four braids. In Austria all braided breads are called Striesel, in Israel it is called Callah. In Czechoslovakia it is called Hoska. In each country such bread is served for special occasions, and is always a light, delicately sweet bread – which will please guests at holiday time.



Jule Kaga

3/4 cup milk	1/2 cup sugar
1 tsp. salt	1 cup (1 stick) butter or margarine
1/2 cup warm water (105-115 degrees)	2 pkgs or cakes yeast
4 cups unsifted flour (about)	1 tsp. ground cardamom
1/2 cup raisins	1/4 cup chopped citron
1/4 cup chopped candied cherries	1/4 cup chopped almonds

Makes 1 large round loaf

Scald milk; stir in sugar, salt and margarine. Cool to lukewarm. Measure warm water into large bowl. Sprinkle or crumble in yeast; stir until dissolved. Stir in lukewarm milk mixture, 2 cups flour and ground cardamom. Beat until smooth. Stir in enough additional flour to make a stiff dough. Turn out onto lightly floured board. Knead until smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes. Place in greased bowl, turning to grease top. Cover; let rise in warm place, free from draft, until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour.

Punch down. Turn out onto lightly floured board. Knead in raisins, citron, candied cherries and almonds until well distributed. Form into round ball; place on large greased baking sheet. Cover; let rise in warm place, free from draft, until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour.

Bake in moderate oven (375 °F) about 40 minutes. Cool on wire rack away from draft. Frost with confectioners sugar icing and decorate with almonds and candied fruit.

❖ Jule Kaga is a Norwegian fruited sweet bread flavored with cardamom, a favorite spice in Scandinavian countries. Rich with raisins, citron, candied cherries and nuts, it takes the place of fruit cake, when served with a favorite beverage.



Grecian Feast Bread

1 pkg. dry yeast	1/4 cup warm water
1/4 cup milk	1/4 cup sugar
1 tsp. salt	2 tbsp. melted shortening
2 3/4 - 3 cups flour	1 egg
1/2 cup currants	Blanched almonds
1/4 cup candied cherries	Confectioners icing

Sprinkle yeast into water. Stir until dissolved. Scald milk. Pour into large mixing bowl. Add sugar, salt, shortening. Cool until lukewarm. Stir in 1 cup flour. Add dissolved yeast. Add egg and beat hard. Add currants. Add enough additional flour to make a stiff dough. Turn dough out on floured board and knead adding more flour as needed to make a soft dough that is stiff enough to handle. Knead until dough is smooth and satiny (5-10 minutes) and shape into a smooth ball. Place in a lightly greased bowl. Turn dough over so top will be lightly oiled. Cover and let rise until doubled (about 2 hours), punch down. Divide dough into three equal parts. Shape each part into smooth ball. Place balls on lightly greased baking sheet so that they form a 3 leafed clover, about 1/2 inch apart. Cover and let rise until doubled (about 1 hour), bake in moderate oven (350 °F), 40-45 minutes. Remove from baking sheet and cool on rack. When cool, pour soft confectioners icing over each of the loaves letting frosting drip down sides. Arrange almonds and sliced cherries in 3 petalled flower shapes on frosting.

❖ A special holiday bread from Greece is baked in a three petalled loaf. The legend is that the three small loaves baked as one larger loaf represented the Trinity. The finished loaf was then decorated with almonds, arranged as a three-petalled flower on each loaf. When the bread is served, each person is given a thin slice from each of the three "petals" of the loaf.



Kulech

1 cup milk	1 tsp. salt
1/4 cup sugar	2 tbsp. margarine or butter
1 pkg dry yeast	1/4 cup water
2 1/4 - 3 cups flour	1 tsp. grated lemon peel
1 egg	1/4 cup chopped almonds
1/4 cup seedless raisins	Confectioners sugar frosting
Yield: 2 cakes	Colored sprinkles

Scald milk, add margarine, sugar, salt. Cool to lukewarm. Dissolve yeast in warm water. Add enough flour to milk mixture to make a thick batter. Add yeast mixture, lemon peel and egg. Add enough more flour to make a stiff batter, and beat 2 minutes. Stir in enough additional flour to make a soft dough. Turn out onto a lightly floured board, and knead until smooth and elastic (8-10 minutes). Place in a greased bowl, turning to grease top. Cover, let rise until double in bulk, about 1 hour.

Punch dough down, turn out onto lightly floured board. Knead in almonds and raisins. Divide dough in half. Shape each half into a ball; press each ball into a greased 1 pound coffee or shortening can. Cover; let rise in warm place free from draft, until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour.

Bake in moderate oven (350 °F) about 30-35 minutes. Remove from cans when cool, frost tops with confectioners sugar frosting and decorate with colored sprinkles.

❖ In old Russia, important celebrations were celebrated with a great feast. Kulech was considered so delicate that homemakers put pillows around the pan in which it was rising so that it would not fall. Husbands with heavy boots and children kept out of the kitchen until it was safely out of the oven. For Easter time, the letters XV – initials meaning “Christ is Risen” – were shaped in the top of the cake. For holidays such as Christmas, the icing and colored sugar candies were used to decorate the top.

These small dome shaped loaves are supposed to resemble the domes of the churches in Russia.



Stollen

3/4 cup milk	2/3 cup butter or margarine
1/2 cup sugar	1 1/4 tsp. salt
2 pkgs. yeast	1/2 cup water
5 1/2 - 6 1/2 cups unsifted flour	3 eggs, beaten
3/4 cup chopped blanched almonds	3/4 cup candied fruit
1/3 cup golden seedless raisins	Confectioners frosting
Yield: 3 loaves	

Scald milk, add margarine, sugar, salt. Cool to lukewarm. Dissolve yeast in warm water. Add enough flour to the cooled milk mixture to make a batter. Then add the yeast mixture and the beaten eggs. Add enough flour to make a thick batter. Beat at high speed 2 minutes, scraping bowl occasionally. Stir in enough additional flour to make a soft dough. Turn out onto a slightly floured board. Knead until smooth and elastic, about 8 to 10 minutes. Place in oiled bowl, turning to oil top of ball of dough. Cover, let rise in warm place, free from draft, until doubled in bulk, about 1 1/2 hours.

Combine almonds, candied fruits, and raisins. Punch dough down; turn out onto lightly floured board. Knead in nut and fruit mixture. Divide dough into three equal pieces. Roll each piece of dough into a 12 X 7 inch oval. Fold in half lengthwise. Place on greased baking sheets. Cover; let rise in warm place, free from draft, until double in bulk, about 45 minutes.

Bake in moderate oven (350 °F), about 20 to 25 minutes or until done). Remove from baking sheets while warm. Frost with confectioners sugar frosting while still slightly warm. If desired decorate with nuts and candied cherries.

❖ Stollen is the traditional bread served in Germany on Christmas Eve. Families gather to eat the Christollen at about 5:00 in the afternoon. They then attend church and return home to open their gifts and have a late supper. Stollen is kept in the house during the holiday season to serve guests with a drink, in place of fruit cake.

The shape of the stollen is supposed to represent the manger in which the Christ Child was born.



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