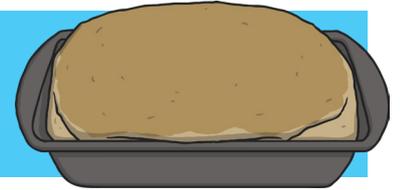


Pan de Muerto (Bread of the Dead)



This is a type of traditional Mexican Bread that is sweet to taste. Pan de Muerto is made in different ways in different parts of Mexico and other countries that celebrate Day of the Dead. Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) is celebrated at the start of November in Mexico and other countries.

It is traditionally eaten with Mexican Hot Chocolate. This can be made simply using instant hot chocolate and adding $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of cinnamon. For a luxury version: heat in a pan until melted and hot, 1 tin of evaporated milk, one small bar of chocolate and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of cinnamon and nutmeg along with a couple of drops of vanilla essence. Water can be added to change consistency if needed.

Ingredients

- 50g butter (plus extra for greasing)
 - 4 tablespoons semi skimmed milk
 - 4 tablespoons warm water
 - 375g plain flour (with some extra for kneading)
 - 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoons dried active baking yeast
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
 - 4 tablespoons caster sugar
 - 2 eggs, beaten
- For the Glaze:
- 4 tablespoons caster sugar
 - 4 tablespoons orange juice

- 1 tablespoon orange zest
- 2 tablespoons caster sugar

Equipment

- 2 x Medium saucepans
- Wooden spoons
- 2 Large bowls
- Cling film
- Baking tray
- Oven
- Pastry brush

Method

1. Put the butter and milk into the saucepan and heat gently until the butter melts and they are mixed together. Then take off the heat and stir in the warm water.
2. In a large bowl, mix together 125g of the flour, yeast, sugar and any variations such as cinnamon or aniseed.
3. Now beat in the warm liquid mixture you made and then add the eggs and beat it all so it is mixed well.
4. Stir in the rest of the flour gently, a small bit at a time until the dough is nice and soft.
5. Sprinkle some of your spare flour onto your baking surface and tip out the dough onto it. Knead the dough well until it is smooth and elastic.
6. Put the kneaded dough into a clean and oiled bowl and cover with cling film. Leave the dough in a warm place to rise until it has doubled in size (about 1-2 hours).
7. When it has risen, punch your fist into it a couple of times whilst still in the bowl. (This releases the carbon dioxide that has built up – you might even hear a hissing sound as it releases.) Tip the dough back on to your baking surface and mould it into the shape you choose. Traditionally, this is a round loaf with a circle in the middle on top and lines going to the edge (a bit like a flower or sunshine).
8. Now put the shaped dough onto a greased baking tray, loosely covered with cling film, and leave in the warm place to rise a second time. (Again until it has doubled in size - about 1 hour).
9. Remove the cling film and bake the dough in a preheated oven at 180°C/gas mark 4 for about 35-40 minutes or until it is golden brown. Remove from the oven.
10. Whilst the bread is cooking you can make your glaze by heating and mixing the glaze ingredients in a pan. Bring to the boil for 2 minutes and use the glaze whilst it is still warm.
11. When the bread has cooled slightly, but still warm, brush it with your glaze, then sprinkle some spare sugar on the top of the glaze so it sticks.

Variations:

Optional tastes to add: orange zest, cinnamon, aniseed.

Make the basic shape of a skull, glaze and then use icing to decorate in bright colours.

Try moulding into shapes of animals or angels.