

Brioche

Yield: 2 loaves or about 2 dozen 3-inch brioches.

This recipe is slightly less complex than the traditional French brioche method, but it produces a rich, firm, and buttery bread that is completely satisfying. It can be baked in regular loaf pans, yielding a spectacular sandwich and toasting bread. It is perfect for enclosing roasts and other meat to be baked en brioche, and of course it can be formed into the traditional round brioche shape, delicious served warm from the oven with butter and preserves.

2 cups milk

1 cup unsalted butter, plus extra for greasing the pans

¼ cup sugar

2 packages active dry yeast

4 tsp salt

3 eggs, at room temperature

8 cups unbleached all-purpose flour

2 to 3 T vegetable oil

1. Combine the milk, butter, and sugar in a medium sized saucepan and bring to a boil. Remove from the heat and pour into a large mixing bowl. Cool to lukewarm.
2. Stir in the yeast and let stand for 10 minutes. Stir in the salt. Beat the eggs thoroughly in a small bowl and add to the milk mixture. Stir in 7 cups of the flour, 1 cup at a time, until you achieve a sticky dough. Flour a work surface and turn the dough out onto it. Wash and dry the bowl.
3. Sprinkle additional flour over the dough and begin to knead it, adding more flour as necessary until you achieve a smooth, elastic dough, about 10 minutes.
4. Pour 2 to 3 tablespoons vegetable oil into the bowl. Turn the ball of dough in the oil to coat well. Set the dough aside, covered with a towel, to rise until tripled in bulk, about 2 hours.
5. Punch down the dough, turn out onto a lightly floured work surface, and knead for about 2 minutes. Return the dough to the bowl, cover, and let rise again until doubled.
6. Preheat the oven to 375F
7. The dough is now ready to be formed. If you are baking it in loaf pans, use 2 pans (5x9x3 inches) lightly buttered. For traditional brioche, use buttered muffin tins or imported brioche molds, available in varying sizes from cookware shops. If you are enclosing a roast or other food in brioche, proceed according to that recipe. Let the formed loaves rise until nearly doubled.
8. Bake until golden brown, 30 to 40 minutes (slightly less for small brioches). The loaves will sound hollow when thumped on the bottom. Cool slightly before unmolding; cool completely before wrapping.