

CHEESE BREAD

Makes 1 loaf.

By Dennis W. Viau; adapted from a formula in
Professional Baking by Wayne Gisslen.

This bread benefits from a garnish of Romano cheese and crisp-fried prosciutto. They add a satisfying flavor and crunch to what would otherwise be a standard bread. For this loaf I followed a strict metric formula, but I give equivalent measurements as well.



Ingredients:

For the Bread:

Water: 200g / 8 fl. oz. / 1 cup

Milk: 100g / 4 fl. oz. / ½ cup

Sugar: 14g / ¾ oz. / 1 tablespoon

Active dry yeast: 6g / 2 teaspoons

or fresh (baker's) yeast: 18g / ¾ oz. / 2 tablespoons

Egg: 1 large (60g in the shell), separated

Flour: 500g / 1 lb. 4 oz. / 4 cups

Salt: 12g / ½ oz. / 2 teaspoons

Fat (whole butter): 18g / ¾ oz. / 4 teaspoons

For the Garnish:

Cheese: (Parmesan or Romano) 18g / ¾ oz. / ¼ cup, shredded

Prosciutto: 1 slice fried until crisp and then finely chopped (7g / ¼ oz.)

Directions:

Combine the water and milk (preferably at room temperature or slightly warmed) with the sugar and yeast in a large bowl. Let stand 3 to 5 minutes to activate the yeast. Add the egg yolk (retain the white) and mix.

Add about half the flour with the salt and mix to form a batter. Start adding flour, a little at a time, until the mixture comes together to form a moist dough. You might need less or more flour than the amount in the formula above, depending on how much moisture your flour absorbs. (I almost always need to adjust.) Add the fat and knead until it is thoroughly combined into the dough.

Knead the dough 5 to 8 minutes until smooth (this can be done in a stand mixer with a dough hook). Place the dough in a large greased bowl and cover with plastic wrap or a damp cloth. Set aside to rise until doubled in bulk, about an hour (or longer, depending on the warmth of your kitchen).

While the dough is rising, shred the cheese. Fry the prosciutto until crisp, then finely chop.

For the second rise, punch the dough down and shape into a loaf to either fit your bread pan or to place on a baking sheet. Mix the reserved egg white with a few teaspoons of water to make an egg wash. Brush the outside of the loaf with egg wash and garnish well with shredded cheese and prosciutto. Place in your baking pan and cover lightly with plastic wrap. Allow to rise until doubled, about 45 minutes.

Heat the oven to 175°C (350°F) with a rack in the lower center. Place the loaf pan or baking sheet in the oven and bake until done. Depending on the shape of the pan used, baking time could be 30 to 50 minutes. Bake until browned and the loaf has a hollow sound when thumped. For accuracy, I use a digital thermometer. The bread is done when the internal temperature is around 95°C (200°F) in the center.

Cool thoroughly on a rack before slicing.

The **Step By Step** guide begins on the following page.

STEP-BY-STEP

1



Combine water, milk, yeast, and sugar in a bowl. Let stand a few minutes to activate the yeast.

2



Add the yolk and about half the flour along with the salt. Mix to make a batter.

3



Although I'm preparing this dough in a stand mixer, you can make this dough by hand. Start adding flour until the batter becomes a dough.

4



Add the butter and work it into the dough. The dough will break up initially, but keep working it and the dough will come back together again.

5



This is the step when I think making bread is more of an art than a science. How much flour or water is needed? It will depend on the flour, which can change from brand to brand, even at different times of the year. I like to work the dough in the bowl, adding flour a little at a time, until I see the dough pulling away from the sides of the bowl but sticking in the bottom.

6



The texture I look for is a dough that will stick to my hand if I squeeze it, but won't stick to the counter or my hand as I knead it quickly. This gives me the texture of crumb I want in a loaf of bread.

7



Knead the dough several minutes, then place it in the bottom of a greased bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise until doubled in bulk, about an hour. The rising time will depend on the temperature of your kitchen. (My favorite place to put the bowl is on top of my computer where it is warm.)

8



While the dough is rising, prepare the cheese and prosciutto. Shred the cheese if not already shredded. Fry one piece of thinly-sliced prosciutto in a skillet until crisp, then finely chop it.

9



After the first rise, punch down the dough and shape it into a loaf. It can be round or oval, depending on the shape of bread pan you are using. Mix the egg white with a couple teaspoons of water to make an egg wash, then brush the dough with it.

10



Combine the cheese and prosciutto, then garnish the brushed loaf. I did this on a piece of parchment paper. Any cheese/meat mixture left over was sprinkled into the bottom of the loaf pan to flavor the bread on the bottom.

11



To make a more dramatic looking loaf, I chose to use a deep springform pan. Although the pan is nonstick, I chose to line the bottom and sides with parchment paper because I wasn't certain how much the cheese might stick. Place the dough in your bread pan and let rise again until doubled, about 45 minutes.

12



Bake until done, then cool on a rack before cutting. This pan does make an oddly shaped loaf of bread, but it has good presentation value at the table.



Conclusion

This bread has a tender white crumb with a delicate flavor. The crust's Romano and prosciutto add a cheesy flavor and crunchy texture. I want to try making this bread with sharp cheddar and crisp-fried bacon.