

PORTUGUESE SWEET BREAD

Makes 2 loaves

By Dennis W. Viau; modified from several recipes.

Portuguese Sweet Bread is a slightly sweet bread with a delicate and tender crumb, but a deeply colored crust. There are no special ingredients, but you can modify the flavor with cinnamon, nutmeg, or other spices. The following is what I found to be a traditional formula for the bread.



Ingredients:

1 tablespoon active dry or instant yeast (one packet is okay)

¼ cup (60ml) warm water (110°F/43°C)

1 cup (237ml) warm milk (110°F/43°C)

¾ cup (150g) sugar

4 tablespoons (¼ cup/2 ounces/57g) butter, room temperature

½ teaspoon salt

4 eggs (one separated, reserve the white), room temperature

Optional: ½ teaspoon cinnamon

Optional: ½ teaspoon nutmeg

5 cups (25 ounces/~700g) all-purpose flour, maybe a tablespoon or two more if needed

Directions:

Stir the yeast with a pinch of sugar into the warm water and set aside for about 10 minutes. If the yeast is alive the mixture will foam after a while.

Place the sugar, butter, and salt in the bowl of a stand mixer. Warm the milk to about 110°F/43°C and add to the sugar mixture. Stir to melt the butter. Attach the mixer blade and add three eggs and the yolk from the separated egg (retain the white). Blend well. Add the yeast mixture and blend. Optional: You can add the cinnamon and/or nutmeg and blend.

Adding about half a cup at a time, add the flour and blend into the mixture. As the batter thickens into a dough, remove the mixer blade and attach the dough hook. Continue adding flour and blending until a moist dough forms. I look for the dough to separate from the sides of the bowl but stick in the bottom of the bowl. After the last of the flour is added, you can adjust the consistency of the dough by adding more flour, if necessary, a tablespoon at a time. (When I first made this bread I found I needed to add only one rounded tablespoon of additional flour.)

Knead the dough in the mixer about 5 minutes. Then transfer the dough to a buttered large bowl, cover with plastic, and let rise until doubled in bulk, which could take up to 2 hours, or longer.

Deflate the dough with your hands, kneading it lightly, and then divide into two equal portions. Shape each into a round loaf and place on greased or lined baking sheets. (I used a large and small sheet so that both would fit on the same rack in the oven.) Cover and let rise again about 1 hour. Heat oven to 350°F (177°C).

Combine the retained egg white with a few teaspoons of water to make an egg wash. Brush the top of the loaves with egg wash, then slit the surface with shallow cuts to allow for expansion. Bake 40 to 50 minutes until golden brown. I use a digital thermometer and bake to an internal temperature about 200°F (93°C).

Cool thoroughly before slicing.

The step-by-step photos were removed. See the video for the preparation.