

Brioche



Brioche is a delightful alternative to the traditional Swiss Sunday Zopf, the plaited yeast bread. A buttery-soft dough that metamorphoses into such a beautiful, fluffy bread. What makes it even nicer is that the recipe can be varied to suit the season and the occasion.

A handful of dried cherries and roasted pistachios in the dough make a fantastic brioche for savoury snacks: the sweet cherries are superb with smoked ham or bacon, cheese and fine dairy butter.

For a herb brioche, simply mix fresh herbs thoroughly with the egg in the recipe: basil, say, or maybe sage or parsley, A herb brioche goes well with a fresh summer salad. Whether saffron, grated fresh and dried ginger, a little curry, fennel or caraway seeds, grated zest of lemon or orange: they all add instant flavour to the brioche!

It hardly needs observing that brioche tastes best fresh from the oven. Because of the high egg and butter content, the bread dries out fairly quickly. On the other hand, it is then perfect for a bread soufflé or for light, crispy croutons for salad. My favourite brioche recipe is French toast for breakfast.

For this, 6 slices of day-old brioche are dipped in a mixture of 2 eggs and 300ml of milk or full cream, the pulp of a vanilla pod, a little cinnamon and nutmeg, and a pinch of salt, until both sides are covered, then fried on both sides until browned and cooked through. Served with fresh fruit, whipped honey butter, a little mascarpone or crème fraiche, yesterday's bread is transformed into an utterly gourmet breakfast.



Because brioche is such a light and fluffy bread, it needs a lot of time during preparation to develop its volume. Which is why we prepare the dough the day before. Mix 250g white flour (special Zopfmehl flour is best), 20g sugar, ½ tsp salt, 150g eggs (approx. 3 eggs), 15g fresh yeast, 150g butter, finely cubed, into a very wet dough. Because we're making a savoury brioche, we'll add a handful of dried cherries (softened by soaking), and a similar quantity of roast pistachios. Patient people mix by hand, others use a mixer. Depending on the structure of the flour, you can add a little more flour, but the dough should remain nicely moist until the end, so don't lose your nerve if it still sticks to your hands a little! Form into a ball, place in a bowl and cover with cling wrap. Leave to rise overnight in the fridge. Next day, bring up to room temperature in the bowl; divide into four pieces; form into balls; and place next to each other, seam-side down, in a neat row in a well-buttered cake tin. Leave the dough to rise again, then bake at 190°C for about 25 minutes until golden brown, using the Professional Baking function in the Combi-Steam. After baking, carefully turn the brioche out of the tin and leave on a rack to cool. Cut yourself a generous wedge, spread it with salted butter, and the brioche feels so soft in your mouth, it's a bite of sheer bliss!