


Greek Easter Bread With Red Eggs (Lambropsomo)

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Lambropsomo is the traditional Greek Easter bread. Red eggs are tucked into the dough to symbolize the blood of Jesus Christ. And the bread is often braided with three strings of dough that symbolize the Holy Trinity.

This sweet, spiced bread is traditionally prepared with an essence makhlep, or is flavored with mastic. We used anise extract which is more accessible in the United States.

This beautiful bread is perfect for a centerpiece but also tastes delicious with a nice crust and a tender crumb. Just perfect to eat some lamb with.

The eggs are optional; you can also use more or less eggs, as desired.

Ingredients

2 packets (4-1/2 teaspoons) dry yeast
1/2 cup warm water
1 cup warm milk
1/2 cup butter, melted
2 teaspoons salt
2 tablespoons anise extract
3 eggs, beaten
1-1/2 cups sugar
9 cups flour
2 hard-boiled eggs, dyed red (optional)
melted butter

Instructions

In a bowl, combine yeast, water, milk, butter, and salt. Add anise extract, beaten eggs, and sugar. Stir in flour, 3 cups at a time. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured work surface. Knead for 10 minutes, or until smooth.

Put dough into a large bowl coated with cooking spray, turning once, and cover with a damp towel. Allow to rise until doubled in bulk, about 2 hours. (Gently press 2 fingers into dough. If indentation remains, dough has risen enough.)

Preheat oven to 350°.

At this point, you can either:

- Punch down and place in 2 greased 9-inch round pans, reserving just enough dough to form a cross on top of each loaf. Place a red egg in the center of each loaf (if using) and form cross over it. Let rise 1 hour.
- Divide dough into 3 equal portions, rolling each portion into a long rope. Place ropes lengthwise on a baking sheet coated with cooking spray (do not stretch); pinch ends together at one end to seal. Loosely braid ropes together on the baking sheet; pinch loose ends to seal. Lightly coat dough with cooking spray. Tucked dyed eggs into the braid; they will cook as the bread cooks.

Let rise 1 hour, then bake 30 minutes at 350 degrees. Remove from pans immediately and brush with butter.



Yield:

Makes 2 loaves.



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