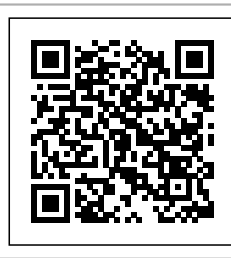


Italian Easter Sweet Bread



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Recipe by: Laura Vitale

Makes 2 loaves

Prep Time: minutes
Cook Time: minutes

Ingredients

½ cup of Unsalted Butter, at room temperature
 ½ cup of Milk
 1 Envelope of Yeast (2 ½ tsp)
 ½ cup of Warm Water, about 110 degrees
 3 Eggs, at room temperature
 2/3 cup of Sugar
 1 tsp of Vanilla Extract
 1 Tbsp of Orange Zest
 4 ½ to 5 cups of All Purpose Flour
 1 tsp of Salt
 6 Hard Boiled Eggs (optional)
 Multi-Colored Sprinkles
 1 Egg, beaten with a little bit of water to make an egg wash

1) In a small saucepan, heat the milk and butter together just until the butter melts, set aside to cool.

2) Add 1 Tbsp of the sugar to the warm water and stir to mix, then sprinkle the yeast over top of the warm sugar and water and set aside for about 5 minutes.

3) In the bowl of a standing mixer with a hand held whisk, mix together the eggs and sugar until combined, add the butter and milk mixture, the yeast and water mixture, the vanilla and orange zest, mix everything together so you have all the wet ingredients well combined.

4) Switch the attachment to a dough hook and add in 4/12 cups of the flour and the salt, mix until a soft dough forms. Gradually add a little more flour (1/4 to ½ cup) to make a nice smooth but slightly sticky dough.

5) Dump onto a lightly floured surface and knead for a few minutes or until it's very smooth. Shape dough into a ball.

6) Lightly grease a large bowl with some vegetable oil, place the ball of dough in the oiled bowl and brush a tiny bit of oil over the top as well. Cover with plastic wrap and place it in a warm spot and let it rise for about 1-1/2 hours or until it has doubled in volume.

7) Line a couple baking sheets with parchment paper and brush them lightly with some melted butter, set aside.

8) Once the dough has risen properly, dump onto a lightly floured surface, punch it down and cut into 4 equal pieces.

9) Roll each piece into a rope about 22 inches long. Lay 2 ropes at a time side by side in front of you loosely braid them together.

10) Lift the braid onto the prepared baking sheet and pinch the ends to seal so now you have a circle. Place 3 eggs in each circle lengthwise, tucking them between the ropes.

11) Do exactly the same process with the other 2 ropes.

12) Cover with plastic wrap and place them somewhere warm for 45 minutes or until doubled in size.

13) Brush the tops with the egg wash and sprinkle over some sprinkles, bake them for 30 minutes at 350F or until golden, making sure to rotate the baking sheets half way through for even baking.

14) Let them cool completely and then slice and serve.

Note: Nobody actually eats the eggs, they are meant to be there as a symbol of Easter but you can just store them in the fridge to be eaten another time.

