

CZECH CHRISTMAS BREAD

"VANOCKA"

INGREDIENTS

- 300 ml (1 and 1/4 cup) milk
- 150g (3/4 cup) sugar
- 3 teaspoons dried yeast
- 500g (4 cups) all purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp salt
- zest from 1/2 lemon
- 2 egg yolks
- 100 g (1/2 cup) butter, melted and cooled
- 1/3 cup raisins, sultanas or dried cranberries (Option: soak your dried fruit in hot water to 'plump' or rum for extra flavour – make sure you drain liquid before adding fruit)



TOPPING

- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup sliced almonds
- icing sugar for dusting

METHOD

1. Warm up the milk slightly. Measure 1 teaspoon from the 3/4 cup of sugar and stir this into the milk along with the yeast. Leave it to bubble and froth (about 10 minutes).

(In case you don't have dried yeasts, buy self-rising flour and you can skip the 1st step. Only make sure you leave the dough to rise.)

2. Meanwhile, mix the flour, the rest of the sugar and salt into a large bowl and whisk to combine. Add lemon zest, egg yolks and melted butter, mixing well. Once the yeast is ready (it should be bubbly and frothy), add to the bowl along with the dried fruit and mix to combine.

(In case you don't have dried yeasts, buy self-rising flour and you can skip the 1st step).

3. Using your hands knead the dough, so that it is well combined. The dough will be slightly sticky – this is perfect. If it is too sticky to handle, add a little more flour.

4. Take the dough out of the bowl and dust the sides and bottom of the bowl with flour. Place the dough back into the bowl, cover with a tea towel and put it in a warm place for 2 hours to rise.

5. Let's braid!

You can braid it using 2 – 9 strands. Using your hands, roll each piece into a strand about 1 inch thick.

Watch the video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QesK_XwDdxU&ab_channel=Cuketka.cz

6. Once braided mix the egg yolks in a small cup and using a pastry brush, brush over a light coating of egg mixture over the braid.

7. Line a tray with baking paper and place the braid on top, set aside.

8. Once the dough has rested, heat the oven to 175C/350F. Brush the entire braid with egg wash and sprinkle the almonds on top. Completely cover the braid with tinfoil and bake for 45 minutes, covered the whole time. After 45 minutes, take the foil off and bake for a further 5 – 10 minutes. Check with a skewer if it comes out clean when pierced.

9. Cool completely before dusting with icing sugar. This bread is delicious with jam or just as it is.

GOOD LUCK! :))

Source: <https://whatsarahbakes.com/recipes/czech-christmas-bread-vanocka/>