

CHOCOLATE BABKA

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PHLCVB
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Yields: 12 individual jumbo babka buns

DOUGH:

- 1¾ cup whole milk
- 1 Tbsp + 2 tsp dry active yeast
- 5 egg yolks
- 1 cup minus 1 Tbsp sugar
- 7½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 1¾ cup butter, softened

1. First, pour the milk into a small saucepan and warm over low heat. Do not let the temperature exceed 115°F. Combine the warm milk and yeast in your mixer's bowl and stir with a spoon until the yeast dissolves.
2. Next, in this order, add egg yolks, sugar, flour, salt, and then butter.
3. With the dough hook attachment on your mixer at the lowest speed, stir the mixture for 1 minute. Then, stop the mixer and scrape down the edges of the bowl. Mix for 3 more minutes on a low speed, then scrape the bowl again to make sure that all the ingredients are getting incorporated. Mix for 1 more minute on low speed to make absolutely certain that the dough is combined.
4. Turn dough out onto a piece of plastic wrap and form into a square, then wrap in plastic, making sure your dough is even, flat, and square.
5. Chill the dough for at least 4 hours or until firm. Dough can be made ahead of time and stored in the freezer for up to 2 weeks. When ready to use, thaw dough in the refrigerator until pliable.

FILLING:

- 10 Tbsp butter
- 1 cup + 1 Tbsp 70% chocolate, chopped
- ½ cup cocoa powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 orange, zested

1. In a large metal bowl, add the butter, chocolate, cocoa powder, salt, and orange zest. In a small pot, add 1 to 2 inches of water and bring it to a low boil. Set the large metal bowl on top of the pot.
2. Stir the mixture frequently so that it does not scorch. Make sure the pot is not boiling too strongly. A small amount of steam and a gentle simmer is ideal.
3. Once everything is melted and well combined, pour your filling into a separate container to cool slightly before using. Can be made ahead of time and stored at room temperature for up to a week or in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

ORANGE BLOSSOM SYRUP:

- 1 cup water
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 orange, peeled
- 1 tsp orange blossom water

1. Combine water, sugar, peels from the orange, and 1 tsp of orange blossom water in a small pot over medium heat.
2. Bring to a simmer. Turn off the heat and cover.
3. Let steep at least 30 minutes or overnight.
4. Strain out the orange peels and chill until needed.



ASSEMBLING THE BABKA:

1. If you chilled the chocolate filling, take it out and allow it to come to room temperature.
2. The filling should still be slightly warm as to be easily pourable and spreadable, but not so hot that it will immediately heat the dough as you are spreading it. If the filling needs to be loosened, you can do so by putting the container in a hot water bath, melting it over a double boiler or heating it up for 10-15 seconds in the microwave. While reheating be sure to stir frequently to melt evenly and not scorch.
3. Unwrap the chilled dough and put on a lightly floured work surface. Lightly flour the top of the dough as well. Using a rolling pin, roll the dough out into a large square about 18" x 18". Use as much flour as you need so that the dough doesn't stick to the table or the rolling pin. If the dough starts to get too soft to handle, transfer it onto a baking sheet and chill it until it is cold and firm enough again to roll further.
4. Pour the chocolate filling onto the dough and spread all over in an even layer all the way to the edges. Starting at the bottom edge closest to you, roll the dough into a log. Cut the log in half lengthwise, so that you have 2 long strips with one side exposing the layers of chocolate. Cut each strip into 3" sections, getting 6 pieces from each so that you have 12 pieces total.
5. With the chocolate facing up, stretch each piece of babka very slightly longer and then tuck one end in and fold the other end around it, so that you have a round bun rolled up with visibly striated layers of chocolate and dough on top. Do this with all 12 pieces. Once shaped, the babka can be refrigerated unbaked for up to 2 days or frozen for up to 2 weeks.
6. Once ready to bake, grease a jumbo muffin tin and place a babka bun in each space. Cover loosely with plastic or a kitchen towel and place somewhere warm to proof until doubled in size. The timing will depend on how warm your room is but could be approximately 45 min – 1.5 hours.
7. Remove the cover, place in a 350°F oven, and bake for about 30 minutes, or until deeply golden brown, about 30-40 minutes.
8. As soon as they are out of the oven, immediately brush with a liberal amount of cold orange blossom syrup, about 1 oz per bun. Let cool in the muffin tin to hold the moisture and soak up the syrup. Remove from the muffin tin and serve. ■

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