



Hot cross buns



picture for illustration purposes only

You will need :

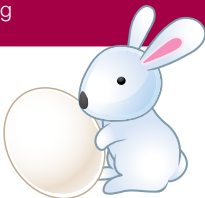
For the Buns

- 500g strong white bread flour
- ½ tsp salt
- 2 heaped tsp mixed spice
- 50g caster sugar
- 50g butter, chopped into cubes
- 200g mixed dried fruits
- 7g sachet easy-blend dried yeast
- 200ml milk
- 2 eggs

For the crosses and glaze

- 3 tbsp plain flour
- honey or golden syrup, for brushing

1. Heat oven to 220°C/gas mark 7.
2. Tip the flour into a bowl and stir in the salt, mixed spice and sugar.
3. Rub in the butter with your fingertips. Stir in the dried fruit, then sprinkle over the yeast and stir in.
4. Gently warm the milk so it is hot, but still cool enough to put your finger in for a couple of seconds.
5. Beat with the eggs, then pour into the dried ingredients.
6. Using a blunt knife, mix the ingredients to a moist dough, then leave to soak for 5 mins. Take out of the bowl and cut the dough into 8 equal pieces.
7. Shape the dough into buns on a floured surface. Space apart on a baking sheet, cover loosely with cling film, then leave in a warm place until half again in size. This will take 45 mins-1 hr 15 mins, depending on how warm the room is.
8. When the buns are risen, mix the flour with 2 tbsp water to make a paste. Pour into a plastic food bag and make a nick in one of the corners. Pipe crosses on top of each bun.
9. Bake for 12-15 mins until risen and golden.
10. Trim the excess cross mixture from the buns, then brush all over with honey or golden syrup.
11. The buns will keep fresh for a day. After that they are best toasted and served with butter.





Easter simnel cake



IF WRAPPED IN FOIL OR STORED IN AN AIR-TIGHT TIN, THIS DENSE FRUIT CAKE WILL KEEP FRESH FOR ABOUT A WEEK.



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You will need :

- 175g butter, plus extra for greasing
- 500g marzipan
- 175g light brown sugar
- 4 large eggs
- 250g plain flour
- ½ tsp baking powder
- 50g ground almonds
- 300g mix of raisins, sultanas and currants
- 50g candied peel, chopped
- 1 lemon, zest only
- 2tsp mixed spice
- 2tbsp milk
- 2tbsp brandy
- 1tbsp apricot jam

Optional : Why not top the cake with some Mini Eggs for a real taste of Easter?

1. Grease a 18cm (7in) loose-bottomed cake tin with butter and double-line the base and sides.
2. Roll out a third of the marzipan into a round the size of the cake tin and set aside.
3. Cream together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Gradually add three eggs while beating.
4. Sift in the flour and baking powder and fold in the almonds. Add the rest of the ingredients, apart from the apricot jam and the last egg.
5. Spoon half the mixture into the cake tin, place the rolled out piece of marzipan on top, pressing lightly, then cover with the rest of the cake mix. Make a slight dip in the top of the mixture to stop it rising when cooking.
6. Bake on the middle shelf of the oven at 170°C (325°F, gas mark 3) for about 90 mins, or until set and nicely browned.
7. Allow to cool.
8. Roll out half the remaining marzipan to the size of the cake. Spread a thin layer of apricot jam on the top of the cake and lightly press the marzipan on top, crimping the edges.
9. Roll the remaining marzipan into 11 balls. Beat the last egg and use to brush the cake top, then stick on the marzipan balls.
10. Put under a medium grill for 1 to 2 mins to glaze.
11. If required, add the mini eggs to the centre of the cake.