

Chocolate Braided Bread

This recipe can be doubled

3 to 3 ½ cups bread flour (can use part whole wheat flour)

1 Tbsp. Saf yeast

¾ cup water, heated to 110 degrees F

1/3 cup brown sugar

1/3 cup cocoa

4 tbsp. butter

½ tsp. salt

1 large egg room temp.

Filling:

5 oz. Cream cheese

1 oz. Semi-sweet chocolate, melted

3 Tbsp. granulated sugar

2 Tbsp. all purpose flour

1 egg yolk

½ tsp. vanilla

1/8 tsp. nutmeg



Chocolate glaze recipe at the end.

Directions

1. Mix about one cup of the flour, the yeast, and the heated water until smooth. This will hydrate the instant yeast. If you are using other than instant yeast, hydrate the yeast separately.
2. Add yeast mixture and the brown sugar, cocoa, butter, salt, and egg and mix to the Bosch mixing bowl equipped with dough hook. Add enough of the remaining bread flour while mixer is kneading on speed one, to make a soft but not tacky dough. Knead until the gluten is developed, about four minutes. Set the dough in a greased bowl, cover, and let it stand until doubled, about one hour.
3. To make the filling, beat the cream cheese until soft and smooth using the Bosch whips. Add the melted chocolate while it is still hot and mix until smooth. Add the sugar, flour, egg yolk, vanilla, and nutmeg and mix until smooth.
4. Once the dough has risen, use a knife to divide the dough into three equal pieces. Roll the dough pieces with a rolling pin to rectangles 15 inches by 5 inches. Spread one-third of the filling down the center of each leaving a one-inch border with no filling. Roll the rectangle into fifteen-inch long ropes with the filling inside. Pinch any seams together and roll the ropes with your hands on the counter until smooth.
5. Braid the three ropes as if you were braiding pigtails. (Some people find it easier to create a symmetrical shape if they start braiding from the center.) When you get to the ends, wet them, pinch them together, and tuck them under. You should have a neat, symmetrical loaf when you are through. You can shape the loaf somewhat with your hands. If you don't like how the loaf looks, simply pull the braids apart and start again. Prepare a large baking sheet by greasing it and sprinkling it with cornmeal. Place the loaf on the pan, cover the loaf, and let it rise until doubled, about one hour.
6. Pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees. Bake the bread for 20 minutes then cover the bread with a large sheet of aluminum foil and bake for another ten to fifteen minutes to until done. The bread should "thump" when tapped on the bottom and the interior of the loaf should register 190 degrees with an insta-read thermometer. Let the bread cool on a wire rack.
7. While the bread is cooling, make the glaze. With a hand-held mixer, beat one ounce cream cheese with one teaspoon vanilla. Add 1 1/2 cups powdered sugar and 2 tablespoons cocoa with enough warm water to make a glaze of drizzling consistency. Drizzle the chocolate glaze generously over the bread.

Baker's notes: To quickly bring an egg to room temperature, place it in a cup of warm water.