

Brioche with a little help from Julia Child

1 Tbs of dry active yeast
1/4 cup of warm water
1 stick of butter (1/4 pound, 112 grams)
1/4 cup of milk
3 1/2 cups of flour
1/2 Tbs of salt
1 1/2 Tbs of sugar
4 large eggs

Brioche dough has a rich, buttery flavor and is closer to cake than bread in texture. Essential to this recipe is either an electric mixer or a food processor. The dough itself needs two risings – the second rising can happen while refrigerated overnight, though we did this within one day.

1. Prepare the yeast. Cut the butter into small pieces and then melt in a saucepan with the milk.
2. Measure all flour except for 1 cup into the mixer bowl. Next, add the salt, the sugar and then the melted butter & milk, and then the eggs. Mix to blend. Take care when adding the yeast, the mixture should be warm to the touch. If it feels too hot, wait a moment for it to cool.
3. Beat at a medium speed for 2 to 3 minutes, slowly add the remaining flour. For best results, use a dough hook (if you aren't using a dough hook unplug the blades if needed). Place dough on a lightly floured board and leave to rest for about 2 minutes.
4. Then knead the dough vigorously for 2 minutes. The dough should feel quite soft.
5. Place dough in lightly-oiled large bowl (2 gallon-sized). Cover with plastic wrap and let sit in a sunny place to rise (preferably in the range of 72–75F). If you're in hot climate, it may be necessary to slow the rise by putting it in the refrigerator. In approximately 3 hours (or when it's tripled in size) turn out onto a lightly floured board.
6. Shape the dough into a rectangle with your hands and then fold the dough in 3 – repeat this process and then return to the bowl. This process redistributes the yeast cells within the dough and helps achieve a finer grain consistency.

7. Cover and let rise again – ideally to double the size. This second rise can be achieved overnight, if you prefer, by placing in the refrigerator.
8. Turn out onto a board. Take one half of the dough and cut into three pieces. Roll each piece out by hand until you have three even ropes. Pinch together at one end. Then, start braiding by crossing the right rope over the center rope. Then, cross the left rope over the center. Alternate in this way, right and left over center, until the braid is complete. Do the same with the other half of the dough.
9. Place the two loaves of bread in two regular loaf pans (lightly oiled). Cover and let rise (the final rise, I promise!) for 1 to 2 hours.

10. If you like you can glaze with an egg wash. Beat an egg and carefully brush the top of the loaf, careful not let any egg run down the side of the pan as this will cause the loaf to stick. Preheat oven to 450F (230C) and bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or if you have a thermometer – until the internal temperature has reached 180-190F.