

Dinner rolls (with tomato soup)

FOOD

RISING TO THE OCCASION

The art of bread-making is a beautiful combination of simple ingredients, patience and technique



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Bread is one of the oldest and most loved foods around the world. Made primarily from flour, water, yeast and salt, bread can be transformed into countless shapes, textures and flavours. From soft dinner rolls to crusty sourdough, focaccia and fluffy burger buns, every bread has its own character and tradition. In this article, we explore different types of breads and what makes each one special.

DINNER ROLLS

These dinner rolls go well with soups, stews and thick gravies. They are extremely soft and not too

big so as to avoid wastage. Follow step-by-step instructions so that you get it right.

INGREDIENTS AND METHOD (For 14 dinner rolls)

- Take ½ cup warm milk. Add 7g yeast. Mix well. Wait for 15 minutes till it foams up.
- Then add 1 egg for richness and 3tbsp olive oil. Mix well and set aside.
- Now in a mixing bowl add 3¼ cups flour. (Here I have used bread flour. But you can use all-purpose flour. Bread flour is available on Amazon.)
- Now add 1½ tsp salt and 2tsp sugar. (It does not make it sweet but like salt it is a flavour booster.)
- Now pour the milk, yeast mixture into the flour and mix well with your hands and knead the dough for at least 10 minutes. (If using a standing mixer then on medium high speed for about 5-7 minutes.)
- Now oil a bowl. Shape the dough into a ball and put it in. Put very little oil on top. Then cover with a

Sourdough bread



Focaccia



(In a bowl break an egg and add 2tbsp milk. Mix well and lightly brush the top of each bun).

- It should be placed in a pre-heated oven at 160°C for 18 minutes. (Ensure that the oven is really hot before you put the baking tray). Do not over-bake, otherwise it will dry out.
- After removing from the oven let it sit for about 10 minutes.
- Enjoy with the Tomato Soup recipe I have given below.

TOMATO SOUP

- In a pot add little butter and sauté some garlic (about 4 cloves) till it gives a nice aroma.
- Now add 4 chopped large tomatoes (skin peeled) and sauté with the garlic.
- When cool blend it in blender jar. Remove back into the pot. Add 4-5 cups vegetable/ chicken stock. And let simmer for 10 minutes.
- Now season with salt and pepper. Add ¼ cup cream and cook on low heat for 5 minutes.
- Soup is ready to be enjoyed with the delicious dinner rolls.

FOCACCIA BREAD

Making focaccia bread at home is magical. The thrill of waiting for the dough to rise, the gentle dimpling of the dough before sending it to bake and then the moment of truth when you cut a slice and hear the crunch, and see the airy texture and the moist crumb. And finally the heavenly taste of fresh bread, olive oil and few olives here and there. Trust me, you will fall in love with this bread. This is a no-knead recipe. A gentle folding technique and lots of love from olive oil, because focaccia truly loves olive oil. Perfect result without even the need to knead. It is also a same-day focaccia bread, it will be ready in less than 2 hours, prep and proofing included.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups (500g) bread flour
- 400ml water
- 2tsp dry yeast or 4tsp fresh yeast
- 1tsp sugar
- 2tbsp olive oil; plus more for greasing and drizzling
- 2tsp salt; plus for sprinkling

METHOD

- In a large bowl, mix water with fresh yeast or dry yeast and sugar. Stir until the sugar is completely dissolved. (This activates the yeast for a beautiful rise.)
- Add all 4 cups of bread flour to the water and yeast mixture. Mix with a wooden spoon until well combined. The dough will be soft and easy to mix, no kneading needed.
- Pour in 2tbsp of olive oil and 2tsp salt. Mix until everything is well incorporated.
- Scrape down the bowl sides. Cover and let rest for 30 minutes. The dough will start developing its structure naturally.

plate and let rise for 2 hours in a warm place. The dough will double in size.

- Now remove the bread onto a flat surface. Cut the dough. Each piece should weigh about 50g.
- Make each piece into a smooth ball, pinching the seam at the bottom.

- Place the rolls a little apart on a parchment-lined baking tray. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and let it rise again for 25 minutes. (To know if they have risen, just press it with the tip of your finger and if it springs back that means the dough has risen well.)
- Brush these rolls with egg wash.

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Soak your hand in clean water (prevents sticking), then grab the 4 sides of the dough and fold them to the centre. This stretching and folding helps develop the gluten network perfectly.

Lift the dough from the centre and slap it into the bowl a couple of times. Cover and rest for another 30 minutes. You'll notice the dough becoming more elastic and developing beautiful bubbles — it's already getting wobbly.

Do this stretch and fold 2 more times at 30 minutes interval. After the last fold and stretch the dough should be full of bubbles and wonderfully wobbly.

Grease your baking tray generously with olive oil. This creates that amazing crispy-bottom crust.

Carefully transfer the dough into the greased tray. Add more olive oil on top. Give it a relaxing olive oil massage.

Now spread the dough towards the edges, but don't worry if it does not cover the entire tray perfectly — rustic is beautiful. Now cover with another tray and let rest for 30 minutes.

Pre-heat your oven to 230°C. While it is heating we will do the final touches of the bread.

Add just a little more olive oil on top, then dimple the focaccia with your fingers. Dip your fingers until you feel the tray. Don't be too gentle. Create those signature focaccia dimples.

Sprinkle a little water on top (this helps to create steam for a crispy crust), then sprinkle coarse salt over the surface. You can put chopped olives if you want.

Bake at 230°C for 20 minutes until golden-brown and beautifully bubbly. The aroma will be absolutely incredible.

Transfer to a wire rack to cool (if you have the patience). You will hear some crackling sounds, which means you've achieved focaccia perfection. The crust should be crispy and the inside light as a feather.

BAGUETTE

The baguette is one of France's most iconic breads, known for its long, slender shape, crisp golden crust and soft, airy interior. Made with simple ingredients — flour, water, yeast and salt — it is a beautiful example of how basic ingredients can create something wonderfully delicious. Traditionally enjoyed fresh, baguettes are perfect for sandwiches, soups, cheese or simply with butter.

INGREDIENTS (for 2 baguettes)

- 500g bread flour
- 350ml lukewarm water
- 10g salt
- 7g dry yeast
- 1tsp sugar
- 1tbsp olive oil

METHOD

Mix the flour, yeast and sugar. Add the water gradually and mix until a sticky dough forms. Add salt and knead for about 8-10 minutes until smooth and elastic.

Place the dough in a lightly oiled bowl, cover and leave in a warm place for 2 hours, or until doubled

in size.

Gently place the dough on a floured surface. Divide into 2 equal portions. Shape each into a long baguette, about 30-35 cm long. Avoid pressing out too much air.

Place the baguettes on a floured baking tray or parchment paper. Cover and let them rest for 45 minutes.

Using a very sharp knife make 3-4 diagonal cuts along each baguette.

Now pre-heat the oven to 230°C. Place a small metal tray at the bottom of the oven. When the bread goes in, carefully pour a cup of hot water into the small tray to create steam.

Bake for 20-25 minutes, until deeply golden and crisp. For an extra crisp crust, leave the baguettes in the switched-off oven for another 5 minutes with the door slightly open.

Transfer to a wire rack and allow to cool for at least 20 minutes before slicing.

To make bruschetta, toast the baguette slice. Spread olive oil infused with garlic. Place fresh tomato slices, mozzarella cheese, basil leaves, sprinkle little salt and drizzle olive oil.

SOURDOUGH BREAD

Sourdough is one of the oldest and most traditional forms of bread, loved for its rustic appearance, crisp crust and soft chewy interior. The bread is known for its distinctive slightly tangy flavour, wonderful aroma, and airy texture. Making sourdough is as much an art as it is a recipe — it requires time, patience and careful handling.

Here I am showing sourdough bread with no starter. (Starter takes about 15 days to make.)

INGREDIENTS

- 500g bread flour
- 350ml lukewarm water
- 7g dry yeast
- 10g salt
- 1tsp sugar
- 1tbsp olive oil
- 1tbsp lemon juice for a slight tang

METHOD

Mix the flour, yeast, sugar and water until a sticky dough forms.

Add salt, olive oil and lemon juice. Knead gently till it comes together. Put in a oiled bowl.

Cover and leave to rise for 1 1/2 hours, until doubled.

Now stretch and fold the dough 4 times. (This will make holes in the bread which sourdough is famous for).

Rest the dough for another 30 minutes. Then do the stretch and fold method. This should be done at least 4 times.

Place a Dutch oven or heavy covered pot inside a pre-heated oven at 230°C.

Now place the dough in the hot Dutch oven. Score the top of the loaf with a sharp knife.

Bake covered for 20 minutes. Then uncover and bake for another 20-25 minutes until deep golden brown.

Cool completely before slicing.

NOTE: For a more sourdough-

like flavour, refrigerate the shaped dough overnight before baking. The longer, slower fermentation gives it more flavour and a chewier texture.

BURGER BUNS

INGREDIENTS (for 8 buns, or according to the size)

- 500g bread flour
- 250ml warm milk
- 1 egg (vegetarians can omit)
- 7g instant dry yeast
- 30g sugar
- 8g salt
- 40g butter, softened
- 1tbsp oil

#For Brushing

- 1 egg
- 1tbsp milk
- Sesame seeds

METHOD

Mix warm milk, sugar and yeast. Leave for 10-15 minutes.

In a mixing bowl add flour, egg, salt and yeast mixture. Mix and knead

for 5 minutes. Add softened butter gradually and knead for another 7 minutes, until the dough is smooth and elastic.

Place in an oiled bowl, cover and leave for 2 hours until doubled.

Divide the dough into 8 equal parts. Shape each into a smooth ball, then gently flatten slightly.

Place the buns on a lined baking tray, leaving space between them. Cover and leave for 35 minutes, until fluffy.

Brush gently with beaten egg and milk. Sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Bake in a pre-heated oven at 190°C for 18 minutes or until golden brown.

While still warm, brush lightly with butter. Cover with a clean cloth for 10 minutes. This keeps the buns soft and fluffy.

NOTE: Don't add too much flour while kneading.

The dough should be soft and slightly tacky. This is what gives you those light,



Hot dog buns →



Burger buns →

Baguette ↓



pillowy burger buns.

CHICKEN BURGER

In a bowl put chicken mince. It should be dry. Then add 1tbsp Worcestershire sauce, salt and pepper. Optional: Grated cheese and jalapenos chopped. Then shape them into a round patty the size of the bun.

Dust the patty with flour. In case you want a crunch then cover with breadcrumbs. Refrigerate for 15 minutes.

Fry in little oil at medium temperature. Flip gently. Cook till it becomes golden brown. Remove on paper towel.

Slice the buns. And warm on a tawa.

Mix mayonnaise with Sriracha hot sauce and spread on both sides of the bun.

Place salad leaves, onion rings, tomato slices, patty and top with a cheese slice. Cover with the other slice.

Enjoy your homemade burger.

HOT DOG BUNS

The recipe for hot dog buns is the same as the burger buns.

In this case the shape has to be elongated into a hotdog shape instead of round shape.

Hot dog buns are indeed very versatile. There are

number of filling suggestions. Original hotdog always has English mustard, Frankfurters, and ketchup. You can also add baked beans, jalapenos and so on.

Here I have shown how to make chicken mayo roll which is actually quite a favourite in pastry shops in Calcutta.

METHOD

Poach chicken breasts till tender. When cool shred the chicken and keep aside.

Mix mayonnaise with little milk so that the mayonnaise becomes loose.

Now add the chicken, chopped salad leaves (amount according to your taste).

Add salt and pepper and a pinch of mustard powder.

Add 1/2 tsp sugar to balance out everything.

Mix well and keep aside.

Slice the hot dog buns halfway only. Do not slice the whole bun.

Place a salad leaf according to the size of the bun. Put some prepared chicken. Cover and enjoy with your choice of sauce. You can butter both the slices before putting the salad leaf.

Pictures: B. Halder

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