

Pistachio, Cardamom, and Chocolate Babka

Makes 2 loaves

Hands-on Time 30 minutes

Proving Time + 4 hours

Cooking Time 30 minutes

Ingredients

300g plus extra for dusting Strong white bread flour
2 tsp Fast action yeast
1/2 tsp plus 1/8 tsp Fine salt
235g Caster sugar
2 tsp plus 1/8 tsp Ground cardamom
1 Egg, large
120ml Full-fat milk
180g Unsalted butter (softened)
Oil for greasing (I use olive oil. You may want to use flavourless e.g. sunflower or vegetable)
75g Pistachios
100g Chocolate (minimum 70%)
2 tbsp Cocoa powder
1/8 tsp Ground cinnamon
100ml Water

Equipment

2x 2lb Loaf tins
Baking parchment
Scissors
Free standing mixer with dough hook
Large bowl
Tea towel or clingfilm
Rolling pin
Chopping board
Knife
Microwaveable bowl
Microwave
Spatula
Palette knife
Saucepan

Line each tin with one piece of baking parchment. You need to ensure the paper is fully intact and you don't cut it into sections as you will be pouring a syrup over the bread once it's baked and want to keep it all contained.

It's best to shape the paper over the outside of the upturned tin. It allows you to make all the folds a bit more easily.

Add the flour to the bowl of the mixer, followed by the yeast on one side. On the other add 1/2 a teaspoon of salt, 60g of sugar, and 2 teaspoons of cardamom.

Add the egg and milk before kneading on a medium speed for 5 minutes. Scrape the bowl around every now and then to ensure all the dry ingredients are incorporated.

Add 80g of softened butter, piece by piece, whilst the mixer is still running and knead for another 5 minutes.

By this time you should have slightly sticky dough.

Lightly grease a large bowl before transferring the dough into it. Cover with clingfilm or a tea towel and leave to prove for at least 2 hours until doubled in size. You can even leave to prove in the fridge overnight if you like.

Once it has finished proving, get on with making the filling.

On a chopping board finely chop the pistachios. It's okay to have some large pieces as it mixes up the texture.

Add the chocolate to a microwaveable bowl and pop into the microwave for 30 seconds at a time, stirring with a spatula between breaks until it has melted.

Add the remaining 100g of softened butter and stir into the chocolate.

Add 75g of caster sugar, cocoa, 1/8 teaspoon of cardamom, 1/8 teaspoon of cinnamon, and 1/8 teaspoon of salt. Stir again until everything is incorporated. Leave to stand to cool, giving it an occasional stir. It should thicken and slightly solidify.

Tip the dough out onto a floured worktop. Add more flour to the top and roll out into a rectangle measuring 40cm x 30cm. Lift the dough every now and then to ensure it doesn't stick to the worktop. Add more flour if necessary.

Spread the chocolate mixture over the top of the dough, ensuring you go right up to the edges.

Sprinkle the pistachios over the top.

Roll the dough up length-ways away from you.

Using the knife, divide the dough into two. Cut both pieces in half, length ways. Take two halves and place them in front of you, still length-ways. You can either cross one end over the other, exposed side up and repeat until they're plaited, or twist the two pieces together, exposed sides touching. It's up to you!

Place into the lined tin. Repeat with the remaining halves and place into the other tin.

Cover and leave to prove for another 2 hours.

Preheat the oven to 180°C/160°C (Fan)/350°F/Gas mark 4.

When the dough is ready, remove the cover and pop the tin into the oven on a middle shelf for 30 minutes.

Whilst the babka is baking, make the syrup. Add the remaining 100g of sugar and 100ml of water to a saucepan. Place over a medium heat and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Once the syrup starts to bubble turn the heat off and leave to rest.

Remove the tins from the oven when the time is up. The babka should be a lovely golden colour.

Immediately pour the sugar syrup over the tops of each of the loaves.

Leave to cool in the tin before removing and tucking in.

Enjoy!