

Kitty Bread Buns



Equipment

(for baking)

- deep bowl
- wooden spoon
- mixer with dough hook attachment (optional)
- sturdy counter table (for kneading)
- parchment paper
- baking tray or loaf pan
- oven and oven thermometer
- cooling rack

(for shaping and decorating)

- shaped and baked kitty buns
- small sharp scissors
- 2 small brushes (for food use only)
- dark chocolate
- microwave or stove (for melting chocolate)
- pink edible dust

Ingredients

- 500gm white bread flour, plus around 20gm more for kneading
- 7gm instant yeast or 15gm fresh yeast
- 1 Tbsp salt
- approximately 300ml warm water
- 1 Tbsp or 15gm softened unsalted butter

Method: Baking the Bread

1. Put flour, yeast and salt into a bowl.
2. Pour about 200ml warm water into the bowl. Temperature of the water for the yeast to activate should be just slightly above body temperature, around 40 to 45 deg Celsius. If you're not sure, get a little water on a spoon and sprinkle it on

- your wrist. If it's feels comfortably warm, that is the right temperature (similar to testing baby's milk temperature before feeding)
3. Mix using a wooden spoon. If it feels too dry, just add a little more water, but just add a little at a time. As Nigella says, ".....you want to end up with a shaggy mess."
 4. Add the butter and mix it in.
 5. Now, start kneading. I usually use my mixer with the dough hook attachment to knead the dough for the first 10 minutes, then pour the dough onto a lightly floured surface to knead by hand to finish the process. The kneading should take around 15 minutes, give or take. By the end of the kneading process, the dough is smoother and no longer sticky. Dough is done when it passes the windowpane test. Pinch and lift up about lime sized amount of dough. Using both hands, stretch it out gently and make a "windowpane", or a translucent skin. If the dough doesn't tear, the dough is ready. If it tears, you need to continue kneading it. You can test again after about 3 minutes.
 6. Shape the dough into a ball, then place it in a lightly oiled clean bowl. Make sure the surface of the dough ball is greased, but rolling the dough ball in the bowl. Cover bowl with clingfilm and leave in a warm place for about an hour or so, until the dough has doubled in size. If you want to put it aside for a longer period (like overnight), then put it in the refrigerator or in a cold place. This is called a cold rise.
 7. To test if the dough is properly fermented, poke 2 fingers about 1 or 2 inches into the dough. If the holes do not close up after you remove your fingers, the dough is properly fermented. Punch the dough down, then knead it for a quick minute or two.
 8. Shape the bread. If you are making a whole loaf, just form the dough into a round or oval shape and lay it on a tray lined with parchment, and cover loosely with clean damp cloth or a lightly floured clingfilm. Leave it to rise for another 30 minutes. To shape kitty buns, see "Shaping and Decorating a Kitty Bun" below.
 9. Preheat the oven 15 minutes before you need to use it. Oven temperature should be 220 deg Celsius if you plan to bake an entire loaf. (For my kitty buns, oven temperature should be lower due to the much smaller bun sizes - around 165 to 170 deg Celsius.)
 10. Before putting the dough into the oven, lightly dust the dough with flour, because, says Nigella, "since you can't get a truly crusty loaf from a domestic oven you might as well go for a different effect to start off with." With my kitty buns, I don't dust them with flour as I was aiming for a light, smooth, even crust. I just put the tray with the kitty buns directly into the oven.
 11. Bake for about 35 minutes or until fully baked. To check, lift the loaf and knock it gently. If it sounds hollow, it's done. My kitty buns also took similar amount of time. However, about 20 minutes into the baking, I covered my buns with aluminium foil to prevent my kitty buns from darkening.
 12. Leave to cool on a wire rack.

Method: Shaping and Decorating a Kitty Bun

1. Shape the bread after the first rising (point 8 under Method below). Divide the dough into 12 equal pieces. Gently tuck the ends under and shape the pieces into round balls.
2. Gently elongate the round ball into an oval shape, taper one end slightly and drape the tapered end over your index finger and allow the rest of the bread to rest against your palm- a little like how you would carry a hamster. Use your

- fingers of your other hand to gently pinch the two sides of the tapered end. This will be the ears of your kitty.
3. Using small sharp scissors, cut 2 ears. Make them deeper and longer than you need them to be, as they will get shorter during the baking process. Put some flour on your fingers, then flour under the ears and over the cut part of the dough. This will make the dough stiffer at the ears.
 4. Using a stick or the other end of a brush, make a slight indent for the neck and between the ears. Smoothen the rest of the bun gently with your fingers.
 5. Lay all the shaped kitty buns on a tray lined with parchment paper, then cover with a clean damp cloth or a lighted floured clingfilm and set aside for another 30 minutes, to rise.
 6. Continue from point 9 under Method in the White Bread recipe.
 7. After the kitty buns have been baked and completely cooled, melt a little dark chocolate. Using a small paintbrush, paint 2 eyes and a tiny dot in between the eyes as a nose.
 8. With another brush, lift a little pink edible dust and add a little pink colour just under the eyes.