

Bolo do Rei - Portuguese King's Cake



Bolo Rei, the King's Cake is a traditional Portuguese sweet bread, with nuts and crystallized (candied) fruit, eaten at Christmas time and especially on 6 January, Kings' Day.

One of the explanations for the tradition of placing a broad bean and a coin (or small trinket) in the Bolo Rei comes from a legend regarding the Three Kings as they followed the Star of Bethlehem on their way to greet baby Jesus. The Kings could not agree amongst themselves which would be the first to give their gift to Jesus. On their travels they met a baker who gave them a loaf of bread with a

broad bean hidden inside it. He told them that the one who ended up with the slice of bread with the bean should give baby Jesus the present first and they accepted this idea as a means of resolving their dispute.

Therefore, the Portuguese place a broad bean in the King's Cake around Christmas time. At family gatherings, especially on 6 January, whoever ends up with the bean, is expected to buy the Bolo Rei for the following year. This can be seen as unlucky really, so the trinket is there to balance the situation - whoever wins the coin or trinket is said to be blessed with good luck.

This recipe is not difficult to make but it is very time consuming, so give yourself plenty of time when you attempt it. When it is a few days old, slices of Bolo Rei are excellent toasted with a little butter for breakfast or tea time.

Ingredients:

Yeast

- ✓ 25g active yeast
- ✓ 2 tsp granulated sugar
- ✓ 100g all purpose flour
- ✓ 75ml warm water

Dough

- ✓ 250g finely chopped assorted crystallized fruit
- ✓ 100g seedless raisins
- ✓ 1 tsp finely grated lemon rind
- ✓ 1 tsp finely grated orange rind
- ✓ 2 tablespoons port wine
- ✓ 1 tablespoon rum
- ✓ 150g butter
- ✓ 150g granulated sugar
- ✓ 3 eggs
- ✓ 2 egg yolks
- ✓ 600g all purpose plain wheat flour
- ✓ 75ml warm milk
- ✓ 50g chopped almonds

- ✓ 50g chopped walnuts
- ✓ 25g pine nuts
- ✓ a dried broad bean (fava) wrapped in greaseproof paper (optional)
- ✓ a small coin or other trinket (wrapped in greaseproof paper (optional))

Topping

- ✓ Crystallized fruit of your choice, such as pineapple, cherries, or figs
- ✓ 1 egg
- ✓ Icing Sugar

Instructions:

Prepare the yeast mixture

In a small bowl mix together the yeast, sugar and flour and enough warm water to create a smooth dough. Cover and set aside to rise in a warm place for about 30 minutes or until it has doubled in size

For the Dough

In another bowl add the chopped cristalized fruit, raisins, grated lemon and orange peel, port wine and rum. Leave the fruit to soak up the liquid while you prepare the dough.

In a large bowl beat the butter and sugar together with an electric mixer until smooth and creamy. Beat in the eggs and egg yolks one at a time, adding a little of the flour now and then if you feel the mixture will curdle. Using a spoon, gradually beat in half of the remaining flour and the milk.

Then add the yeast mixture to the dough making sure it is evenly blended together.

Add the almonds, walnuts and pine nuts and the cristalized fruit mixture.

Lightly mix in as much of the remaining flour as you need to create a sticky bread like dough and until all the fruit and nuts are evenly covered by the dough.

Cover and leave to rise in a warm place for about one hour or until it has doubled in size.

Take the dough and knead for about one minute, then shape into a round loaf and place on a greased baking tray.

Using your thumbs, open up a hole in the middle of the dough so that you are left with a wreath shape, or crown, about 25cms wide. You can grease a small empty food jar with vegetable oil and place it in the middle of the wreath to keep the hole open while you work on the topping.

Make a hole with a knife on one side of the wreath and push the wrapped broad bean into the dough. Choose another spot on the wreath, make a hole with the knife and push the wrapped coin into the dough.

Topping

Decorate the wreath with a few cristalized fruits. Beat the egg and brush over the wreath. Cover and let rise in a warm place for about one hour or until it has doubled in size. Remove the food jar and bake in a preheated oven at 190 degrees C for about 40 minutes or until golden brown. Cool and dust with icing sugar.

Enjoy!