

ADVENT WEEK 2: PREPARE YE THE WAY FOR THE STOLLEN AHEAD

[NB: check the byline, thanks. /~Rayne]

I had to clean out the fridge this week. The last remnants from Thanksgiving needed to go – a lone sweet potato, a butternut squash, another equally lonely potato had rattled around in the vegetable drawer long enough.

I also had some dried apples I needed to knock off.

All had to go before I lay in the next batch of pre-holiday groceries.

What you're looking at is my first candidate for the stollen election – a dog's breakfast stollen, made with a dough using sweet potato, squash, and potato with a mango-pineapple-apple filling.



It's pretty good if I do say so myself. The dough is a little lighter in color because of the amount of potato but still a pale yellow-orange. I think I should have chopped the fruits smaller to get better distribution, but there probably would have been voids because of the steam from the fruit as they baked and settled.

If I had to throw an election for an orange-

tinted lump, it'd be this one and not Mar-a-Lago's chief resident golf and tax cheat.

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I love making this dough, have probably made it every holiday for more than a decade. It's consistently moist and fun to work with. I've made it often enough that I've learned how to play with it a bit and use it as I did for batting vegetable drawer clean up.

Here's the recipe if you want to try the dough – it's actually one used for rolls:

Squash or Pumpkin Cloverleaf Rolls

Makes 16 cloverleaf rolls

Ingredients:

1 cup squash or pumpkin puree

1/2 cup water

1/2 cup milk

1/3 cup butter, melted

4-1/2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour

3 tablespoons brown sugar

2 teaspoons salt

grated zest of 1 orange (optional)

2-1/4 teaspoons SAF yeast or 2-3/4 teaspoons bread machine yeast

Instructions:

If using fresh squash/pumpkin, prepare and cool to room temperature or slightly warmer.

Place all the ingredients in the pan according to the order in the bread machine manufacturer's instructions.

Program for the Dough cycle; press Start. (This recipe is NOT suitable for use with the Delay Timer.)

Grease 16 standard muffin cups (one full pan plus 4 cups in a second pan). When the machine beeps at the end of the cycle, immediately remove the dough and place on a lightly floured work surface; divide into 4 equal portions.

Divide each of those pieces into 4 equal portions. Divide each of the 16 portions into 3 portions and form these into small balls about the size of a walnut. You want them all about the same size; this is important or else the rolls will look funny after baking.

Arrange 3 balls of dough touching each other in each of the muffin cups. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and let rise until doubled in bulk, about 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 375F degrees.

Bake for 15 to 18 minutes, or until golden brown. Immediately remove the rolls from the pan. Let cool on racks or serve warm.

Original source:

Squash or Pumpkin Cloverleaf Rolls, p. 356-357, The Bread Lover's Bread Machine Cookbook, by Beth Hensperger – my copy is getting tatty, now littered with tape flags. It's one of my favorite cookbooks. Best, most reliable dough recipes, great for baseline doughs for experimentation. I cannot recommend this cookbook enough, have bought many to give as gifts over the years.

Recommendation:

Use butternut squash for best results, or comparable firm, dry-fleshed squash. In my experience, acorn squash puree has been moister, has more variable sugar content, and surprisingly less color in the finished dough.

I've tried using commercial canned pumpkin in same recipe; it is definitely not as good as freshly cooked squash, or even as good as frozen home cooked squash. The dough is tougher and not as sweet using canned. A large can of pumpkin is about 3.5 cups of puree, or 3+ batches of rolls – that's a lot of so-so rolls. Use fresh whenever possible.

Bread flour does not seem to work as well as all-purpose flour, at least not when humidity is high. Use whatever you have, but watch the dough and add more flour/water as necessary. When well

kneaded the dough is not quite as moist and soft as a sweet dough but more so than a bread dough.

Substitutions:

I've tried this same recipe using mashed sweet potatoes, and a combination of mashed Russet potatoes with pumpkin. Whatever you use should measure 1 cup, a direct replacement for the squash. Sweet potatoes and the potato/pumpkin combo work much better than canned pumpkin – the yeast likes whatever is closest to fresh, least processed.

Do plan to adjust water or flour content during kneading depending on the moisture in potatoes/squash. Dough should be softer and stickier than bread dough once the right amount of water/flour have been added.

Notes:

I've also used this for cinnamon rolls as well as cloverleaf-shaped, Parker House-shaped rolls and hamburger buns. I use about 3-4 tablespoons cinnamon to 1/2 cup each brown and white sugar – this is enough for about 2 batches of dough. Divide dough in half, roll out to approx. 11" x 17", brush with melted butter, and sprinkle with the cinnamon mixture (add more or less to your taste). Roll up, pinching along edges to seal, then slice into 12-16 pieces total, depending on how big you like your rolls. I put mine in greased muffin tins, allow to rise over tins (about 20-25 min), then bake 15-25 min depending on how big the rolls are. I prefer not to glaze mine, only brushing the tops with a bit of melted butter while still warm.



Mixing Dough By Hand (without bread machine):

Prepared squash/pumpkin puree should be at room to bathwater temp.

Scald milk (bring just to a boil and remove from heat immediately.) Stir in sugar, salt, squash/pumpkin puree, and butter. Set aside and allow to cool to lukewarm.

In a large bowl mix warm water and yeast. Stir until dissolved. Stir in lukewarm milk mixture, beaten eggs, and half the flour. Mix until smooth.

Add remaining flour gradually, mixing as you go. You may need a bit more or less than the total 4-1/2 cups called for in the recipe, depending on the humidity and water content in squash and butter. Your dough should be elastic and slightly stiff but not dry (sweet doughs are typically a bit more moist and sticky.)

Turn dough out onto a floured board and knead until smooth and very elastic. This usually takes 8-10 minutes.

Butter the inside of a large mixing bowl. Put dough in bowl and turn dough over a couple of times to coat it all with the butter.

Cover bowl and place in a warm place so it can rise. It will take about 1 hour to double in bulk.

At that time turn out onto a lightly floured board to shape; dough should deflate somewhat when dumped out before shaping.

Follow remainder of recipe as instructed for bread machine (Step 4 onward).

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Fruit filling

I completely swagged the fruit filling. I can't tell you how to duplicate exactly what I did except in general terms. These are roughly the amounts I used for each ingredient:

2 cups chopped dried apples

1/2 cup chopped dried pineapple

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped dried mango
2 cups orange juice (I needed to use up the
OJ, too. LOL Apple juice may work just as
well.)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup brown sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cardamom
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon nutmeg
2 tablespoons cornstarch
2 tablespoons melted butter
Cinnamon-sugar mix for cinnamon rolls

I mixed all the fruit, juice, brown sugar, and spices in a covered heat-safe bowl, then placed it on a trivet inside my Instant Pot over 2 cups of water. I cooked the fruit for 20 minutes on high pressure, let it depressurize naturally, and then let the fruit mixture cool to room temperature.

I stirred in the cornstarch when the fruit was cool; if the cooked fruit is too juicy, drain off some of the juice before adding the cornstarch.

After rolling the dough out into two equal rectangles about 9" x 12" – wide enough for a 2-lb. bread pan – I brushed the dough squares with the melted butter, topped that with the fruit mixture using $\frac{1}{2}$ on each of the dough squares, then sprinkled cinnamon-sugar mix over all before rolling the dough and pinching it closed along the length.

After putting a piece of parchment paper in each baking pan, I plopped the rolled up dough into their respective pans, covered them with a piece of plastic and a tea towel before putting in a warm place to rise.

Turned on the oven to 375F degrees at this point; not long after my oven has fully pre-heated the dough will have doubled in size and risen above the top of the loaf pans. In the bottom of my oven I place a heavy oven-proof shallow metal pan and pour in 2 cups of water to provide steam during baking.

Removing the plastic and towels, I put the pans

into the oven and set the timer for 40 minutes. The dough will be golden at 40 minutes but not likely done. I use a digital thermometer with a probe for use in the oven at this point, setting the alarm for 190F degrees.

Breads are done at 195F but since foods continue to cook even after removed from heat, I remove the bread/rolls at 190F and let them finish the last five degrees on the counter.

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There you have it, my first candidate for the stollen election.

What about you? What bread/cake containing fruit did you make/buy/consume this week? Tell us in comments.

This is an open thread.