

Sourdough Hot Cross Buns

For the Sweet Stiff Starter:

- 60 g active starter (3 *tbsp*)
- 120 g all-purpose flour (1 *cup*)
- 60 g water ($\frac{1}{4}$ *cup*)
- 15 g sugar (3 *tbsp*)

For the Tangzhong:

- 40 g all-purpose flour ($\frac{1}{3}$ *cup*)
- 180 g milk ($\frac{3}{4}$ *cup*)

For the Milk Mixture:

- 120 g milk ($\frac{1}{2}$ *cup*)
- 120 g brown sugar ($\frac{1}{2}$ *cup*, packed)
- 6 *tbsp* butter, cubed (85 g)

For the Dough:

- 200 g bread flour (1 $\frac{2}{3}$ *cups*)
- 200 g all-purpose flour (1 $\frac{2}{3}$ *cups*)
- 10 g salt (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ *tsp*)
- Spices:
 - 1 *tsp* cinnamon
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ *tsp* allspice
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ *tsp* cardamom
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ *tsp* cloves
- Zest of one orange (*optional*)
- 2 large eggs (100 g)
- All of the sweet stiff starter
- All of the tangzhong
- All of the milk mixture
- 1 *cup* dried fruit of choice, soaked in hot water

For the cross:

- 50 g all-purpose flour ($\frac{1}{2}$ *cup*)
- 50 g water ($\frac{1}{4}$ *cup*)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ *tsp* orange extract (1 g, *optional*)

For the Glaze:

- ½ cup powdered sugar (80 g)
- 2 tbsp orange juice (*fresh from the zested orange*) or milk (30-35 g)

Directions:

- 1) **Make the sweet stiff starter.** Mix together all ingredients for the sweet stiff starter. Rest 8-12 hours before incorporating into the dough.
- 2) **Make the tangzhong.** Combine all ingredients for the tangzhong in a small saucepan. Heat over medium-low heat, whisking continuously, until the mixture thickens like a paste. Cool completely before incorporating into the dough. (*This can be done in advance and stored in the refrigerator, or directly before mixing the dough and stored in the freezer while the remainder of the dough is prepared.*)
- 3) **Warm the milk mixture.** In a separate, small saucepan, combine the milk, brown sugar, and butter. Heat the mixture until it reaches 100-110 F, the sugar is dissolved, and the butter is partially melted. Cool slightly before incorporating into the dough.
- 4) Reserve the remaining 2 tbsp from the stick of butter for buttering the 9X13 casserole dish. Leave on the counter to soften while the dough rises.
- 5) **Soak the fruit.** Soak the dried fruit in hot water while you prepare and knead the dough.
- 6) **Begin the main dough.** In the bowl of a stand mixer, add the bread flour, all-purpose flour, salt, cinnamon, allspice, cardamom, cloves, and orange zest (*if using*). Whisk to combine. Add the eggs, sweet stiff starter, tangzhong, and milk mixture. Roughly mix, then transfer to a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook attachment.
- 7) **Knead** on a medium speed (*speed 6 on a KitchenAid*) 8-10 minutes, until the dough pulls away from the sides of the bowl and the stand mixer begins to “jump.” If your dough is not doing this by 10 minutes, add more flour until the dough comes together. Reduce the speed to medium-low (*speed 4 on a KitchenAid*) and continue kneading until the dough is smooth and glossy, 4-5 minutes more.
- 8) Drain off the water from the dried fruit and add the fruit to the bowl of your stand mixer. Knead once more on a low speed (*speed 2 on a KitchenAid*) until the fruit is just incorporated, 2-3 minutes.
- 9) **Bulk ferment the dough.** Transfer the dough to a proofing container and let it rise until it has doubled (*or slightly more*) in size, 8-12 hours. In my kitchen, which rests about 70 F, this takes about 10 hours.
- 10) After the dough has risen, butter a 9X13 casserole dish with the remaining 2 tbsp of now softened butter.

- 11) **Shape the buns.** Turn the dough out onto the counter and divide it into fifteen equal sections, approximately 95 g each (*or eighteen sections approximately 80 g each for smaller buns*). Roll each section into a ball and transfer to the 9X13 casserole dish.
- 12) **Final proof.** Let the buns rise again until they are very puffy and nearly doubled in size once more, 2-4 more hours.
- 13) Preheat your oven to 400 F.
- 14) **Make the cross.** Mix together the flour, water, and (*optionally*) orange extract for the cross in a small bowl, then transfer to a Ziploc bag or piping bag. For the Ziploc bag, cut a very small slit, about ¼ of an inch thick, in the corner from which you will pipe the mixture. Pipe the mixture onto the risen rolls in the shape of a cross.
- 15) **Bake** the rolls at 400 F for 20 minutes, then reduce the oven temperature to 350 F and bake 20 minutes more. The internal temperature should register 190 F.
- 16) **Make the glaze.** While the rolls are baking, whisk together the powdered sugar and orange juice (*or milk*) until smooth. Brush the glaze onto the hot rolls as soon as they come out of the oven.
- 17) **Enjoy!**
- 18) **How to store:** Store on the counter in a Ziploc bag for three, or up to seven, days. Alternatively, flash-freeze the rolls on a sheet pan, then store in the freezer.

To reheat: From room temperature, warm in a low oven (250 F) about five minutes, or in the microwave 30 seconds or less. From frozen, reheat in a 350 F oven for 5-10 minutes, until warmed through.

Notes:

- You can eliminate any or all of the orange additions, if desired.
- Try replacing the soaked fruit with chocolate chips for a fun treat!
- You are welcome to play around with the spice blend, but be careful not to add too much cinnamon, as cinnamon slows fermentation.