

# *Pan de muerto*

## *Bel's recipe*

### **INGREDIENTS**

#### *For the Starter*

1/3 cup of whole milk  
3 ½ teaspoon of active dry yeast  
½ teaspoon of sugar

#### *For the Dough*

4 cups of all-purpose flour (from this take 2  
tablespoon for the starter)  
1 teaspoon salt  
Zest of 1 orange, grated  
150 g of unsalted butter (room temperature)

¾ cup of granulated sugar

3 eggs (already placed in a bowl)

1 teaspoon of vanilla or orange blossom  
extract, or 2 teaspoons of anise seeds

2/3 cup of whole milk

Olive oil as needed

#### *For the Glaze*

1 beaten egg

60 ml lukewarm water

About ¼ cup of melted butter

1/3 cup of granulated sugar

#### *Prepare the starter*

Put the milk (1/3 cup) in a small saucepan over medium heat until warm (at not more than 110°F). In a bowl mix 2 tablespoons of the flour, plus ½ teaspoon of sugar and the yeast, then pour the warm milk and dissolve it. Let stand in a warm place until the mixture bubbles slightly and double its size, 5 to 10 minutes. (If the yeast doesn't bubble, discard it and start again with new yeast.)

#### *Make the dough*

Form a volcano with the flour and make a well in the center. Sprinkle the salt and the orange zest all over the flour. At the center add the butter and the sugar. Knead until the ingredients start to integrate, then add the eggs and knead the mixture. Then add the vanilla or orange blossom extract and the milk and knead until all the ingredients are integrated. Extend the dough a work surface and over the top add the starter and begin mixing with your hand. At the beginning the mixture will be very sticky, but don't worry that's normal. Knead and beat the dough until you have nice, smooth and uniform texture, about 20-30 minutes by hand. Yes! You will be sweating and your arms will hurt but it will be worthy! (Illustration 1; approx. 15 min using an electric mixer with the hook attachment).



*Illustration 1.- Kneading and beating the dough.  
Photo courtesy of Nawa Sugiyama*

Place the dough in a large, lightly oiled bowl, cover with plastic wrap or a towel, and leave in a warm place until doubled in size, 1 to 1-1/2 hours. (Illustration 2)



*Illustration.- Dough doubled in size after resting for an hour in a warm place.*

### **Shape the bread**

Cut off a piece of dough about the size of an orange and reserve. Divide the remaining dough in quarters and shape the pieces on a lightly floured surface into 4 rounds. Lightly oil a heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet or line it with parchment; put the dough rounds on it and flatten the tops with your hands.

With some of the reserved dough, form 4 balls the size of large marbles; set aside and cover with plastic. Divide the remaining dough into 16 pieces and roll them with your hands from the center out, making ropes that are slightly longer than the width of the loaves. As you're rolling, press with your index and middle fingers spread about 1 inch apart to make knobs that represent bones. Arrange 2 of the ropes on top of each dough round, overlapping the ropes in the center. At the very top of each round place the previously reserved marble size balls. Cover loosely with a cloth or plastic wrap and let rise in a warm place until doubled in size, about 30-45 minutes.

Meanwhile, position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F.

Mix the beaten egg and the lukewarm water and brush the loaves before to place them into the oven. Bake until the loaves have an even golden color, 30 to 45 minutes, their bottoms should be browned. Remove from the oven and cool for a few minutes on a wire rack.

### *Glaze the bread*

Brush the loaves all over with some of the melted butter. Sprinkle half of the sugar all over the top, tilting the loaf slightly to help coat it evenly. Repeat with the other loaf and remaining sugar (Illustration 3).

Cool to room temperature before serving. The bread is best eaten within a day of baking.

The bread can be frozen, make sure the bread is well wrapped so it retains moisture. It's important to take the bread out and allow it to thaw completely before unwrapping. Then you can heat it at the toaster oven for 2 min.



*Illustration 3.- Pan de muerto ready to be eaten.*

*Enjoy!*