

ULTRA FLUFFY MILK BREAD ROLLS



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For the tangzhang (starter):

3 tablespoons (43 g) water

3 tablespoons (43 g) whole milk

2 tablespoons (14 g) flour

For the dough:

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups (298 g) flour

2 tablespoons (14 g) dry milk powder (not Cremora)

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (50 g) sugar

1 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon instant yeast

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (113 g) full cream milk, slightly warmed

1 large egg

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup / 4 tablespoons (57 g) melted unsalted butter

for the egg wash

1 egg

1 tablespoon heavy whipping cream or milk

For brushing the baked rolls (optional):

$\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon melted butter

For the whipped honey butter: (optional condiment for the rolls)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (113 g / 4 oz) unsalted butter, softened to room

temperature

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cinnamon (optional)

To make the tangzhong (starter):

Combine the water, milk and flour in a small saucepan, and whisk together until no lumps remain.

Place the saucepan over low heat, and cook the mixture, stirring constantly using a heat-proof rubber spatula or whisk, until thickened to the consistency of loose roux and the spatula/whisk leaves lines in the bottom of the pan when dragged through; about 3 to 5 minutes.

Transfer the tangzhong to a small bowl, cover with plastic wrap directly on its surface and let it cool to room temperature. (To quicken the cooling process, I put it in the fridge while preparing the other steps)

To make the dough.

In the bowl of a stand mixer (or any large bowl or bread machine) whisk together the flour, milk powder, sugar, salt and yeast to combine.

In a 2-cup measuring cup (or medium bowl) whisk together the milk, egg, melted butter and cooled tangzhong until well combined.

Pour the milk mixture over the flour mixture and with the mixer on low speed, knead together using the dough hook (or by hand or bread machine) until a dough forms. The dough will be very sticky when mixing begins, but resist the urge to add more flour; the dough will absorb the excess moisture and come together nicely as the mixing progresses.

Increase the speed to medium low and continue kneading until a smooth, elastic dough forms and is no longer sticky; 15 to 20 minutes. Set the timer! (It takes me exactly 20 minutes until its not sticky enough to handle) At this point, the dough should feel tacky (slightly sticky but not messy) and should easily come together in a taut ball when handled with lightly oiled hands. If this is not the case, then knead in a little more flour, one tablespoon at a time. A good indication of

telling when the dough is ready, is being able to stretch between your hands into a thin film without it breaking right away. When it starts tearing, it will tear in a circular fashion.

Using lightly oiled hands, shape the dough into a ball, and transfer to a lightly greased large bowl. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and allow to rise in a warm place, until almost doubled in volume, 60 to 90 minutes.

Turn out the dough onto a work surface (you shouldn't need to dust it with flour). Pat the dough gently into an 8-inch square of even thickness. Using a bench knife or chef's knife, cut the dough into 9 pieces (3 rows by 3 rows). Separate pieces and cover loosely with plastic.

Spray (or grease) an 8 or 9-inch square pan with non-stick cooking spray. Working with 1 piece of dough at a time and keeping remaining pieces covered, form dough pieces into smooth, taut rounds. To round, set piece of dough on unfloured work surface. Loosely cup hand around dough and, without applying pressure to dough, move hand in small circular motions. Place the rolls into the prepared pan. Cover the pan loosely with plastic wrap and allow the rolls to rise for 40 to 50 minutes, until puffy. In the last 10 minutes of rising, preheat the oven to 350°F/180°C. If you want to ensure browned bottoms on your rolls, place a pizza stone or baking sheet in the oven to heat.

Prepare egg wash by whisking together the egg and heavy cream. When ready to bake, remove the plastic wrap from the pan, then gently brush the rolls with the egg wash. Bake the rolls (on top of the pizza stone/baking sheet, if using) for 20 to 25 minutes, until golden brown on top; a digital thermometer inserted into the center of the middle roll should register at least 190°F. (If the rolls tops are browning too quickly, loosely place a piece of foil on top of the rolls to prevent further browning).

Remove the rolls from the oven, then immediately brush with the 1/2 tablespoon melted butter. Allow them to cool in the pan for 10 minutes, then gently flip them onto a large plate

then onto a wire rack. Serve warm or at room temperature with anything you please or slather with honey butter (recipe below). Store leftovers in an airtight container or freeze in freezer bags.

To make the whipped honey butter (if using):

Add the butter, honey and cinnamon in a bowl and whip with the whisk attachment of an electric mixer until light and fluffy; 3 to 5 minutes.

Serve at room temperature but store in airtight container in the fridge.

Recipe and photo: Nicolette Papas