

PAN DE MUERTO

This traditional Mexican brioche-style loaf is scented with orange and decorated with bread balls and strips that represent skull and bones for Day of the Dead. It's delicious any time of year!

Serves: 1 large loaf



Time: 4 hours



INGREDIENTS

Bread

- zest of 1 orange
- 60 grams (2 oz) raw sugar
- 150 grams (5.3 oz) milk
- 1 tsp orange blossom water
- 1 heaped tsp dried yeast
- 500 grams (17.5 oz) baker's flour
- 1 tsp fine salt
- 1 tsp ground anise
- 2 eggs
- 100 grams (3.5 oz) unsalted butter, softened
- caster sugar, for sprinkling after baking
- juice of 1/2 orange (for glaze, optional)
- 30 grams (1 oz) raw sugar, plus extra to sprinkle (for glaze, optional)
- 1 egg yolk (for glaze, optional)



METHOD

1. Place zest and sugar in mixing bowl. Blitz **10 sec/speed 9**. Scrape down.
2. Add milk, orange blossom water and yeast and warm **4 min/37°C (100°F)/speed 1**.
3. Add 100 grams (3.5 oz) flour. Mix **10 sec/speed 2** then leave for 20 minutes or until it begins to bubble.
4. Add the remaining flour, salt and anise and knead **4 min/Knead**.
5. While kneading, add the eggs one by one, then the butter, piece by piece.
6. Turn dough out and form into a ball. Wrap it in clingfilm or a silicon mat, or place it in a large, greased bowl and cover. Leave in a warm place to rise for 1-1.5 hrs or until doubled in size.
7. Knock back the dough and knead by hand for 30 seconds.
8. Separate one-quarter of the dough and form the remaining three-quarters into a round loaf and place on a lined oven tray. Roll the smaller portion into four small balls, four medium balls and one larger ball. Arrange over the round loaf with the largest ball in the middle, the medium balls next to it at the four points of the compass and the smaller balls next to them to form a cross shape.



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Cover with a tea towel and leave for 1 hour in a warm place to prove (see Tips).

9. Preheat oven to 180°C (375°F). (If glazing, see variation below and glaze before baking.) Bake loaf for 30 minutes until it's dark golden and sounds hollow when the base is tapped. Sprinkle generously with caster sugar as soon as bread is removed from the oven.

Tips

- There are many different ways to decorate your bread. The way I've described is the simplest but you can also create skull and cross bone decorations, as I've done with the glazed loaf. Experiment and have fun! There's no wrong way to do it.

Variations

- You can also glaze the bread for extra gloss and an indulgently sticky finish. (See image below)
- Before baking, place orange juice and sugar in mixing bowl and heat **3 min/Varoma/speed 1**. Add egg yolk and mix **10 sec/speed 4**. Brush glaze all over the dough and sprinkle with extra sugar, then bake.





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Serves: 1 large loaf



SHOPPING LIST:

- Zest of orange (1)
- Raw sugar (90 grams / 3 oz)
plus extra to sprinkle
- Milk (60 grams / 5.3 oz)
- Orange blossom water (1 tsp)
- Dried yeast (1 heaped tsp)
- Baker's flour (500 grams /
17.5 oz)
- Fine salt (1 tsp)
- Ground anise (1 tsp)
- Eggs (2) plus 1 yolk for glaze,
optional
- Unsalted butter (100 grams /
3.5 oz)
- Juice of ½ orange (for glaze,
optional)
- Caster sugar, for sprinkling after
baking



NOTES & TIPS: