

Recipe for Pulla: Finnish Coffee Bread

Scald:

3/4 cup milk

Pour into a large bowl and add

1/2 cup granulated sugar

1 teaspoon salt

1/3 cup butter

1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom

Stir until butter melts. Cool to lukewarm.

Stir in

2 eggs, beaten

Meanwhile, dissolve

1 teaspoon sugar in

1/2 cup lukewarm water

Over this, sprinkle

1 envelope (1 tablespoon) active dry yeast

Let stand for 10 or 15 minutes. Then stir yeast with a fork and add it to the lukewarm milk mixture. Stir.

Beat in

2 cups all-purpose flour

Gradually add another 3 to 3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead for 10 minutes. The dough will be smooth and elastic. Shape into a ball and place in a greased bowl (butter or vegetable oil), rotating the ball until the whole surface is oiled.

Cover and leave the dough to rise in a warm place for about 2 hours, until it's doubled. Punch down.

On a lightly floured surface, divide the dough into three equal parts. Divide each part into three parts again, and roll each part between your hands until it's about 15 inches (about 40 cm) long. Braid the three "ropes" together, pinching the ends together.

Place the braided loaf on a buttered/oiled baking sheet. Repeat to make three loaves. Cover them and let them rise until doubled again (about an hour). If placed side by side, the loaves may touch. This is OK. Bake in a preheated 375° F (190° C) oven for about 30-40 minutes. Tap on the bottom of a loaf; if it sounds hollow, it's done.

As soon as the loaves are out of the oven, brush with a glaze made of

2 tablespoons sugar dissolved in 1 tablespoon hot coffee (instant is fine)

Set aside to cool. Excellent toasted or untoasted.