RECIPE

Pecan Sticky Buns

Soft whole-wheat-and-white cinnamon breakfast buns baked over a thin brown sugar and pecan caramel, with olive oil in the dough, risen only until double for a mile-high kitchen.

MAKES

12 buns US Metric

TOTAL

2 h 45 min

Ingredients

- [ ] 1 cup plus 2 tbsp 2% milk, warm (105 to 115 °F)
- [ ] 1 ½ tsp instant yeast
- [ ] 2 ¼ cups all-purpose flour, spooned and leveled
- [ ] 1 cup whole-wheat flour, spooned and leveled
- [ ] 2 tbsp sugar
- [ ] 1 tsp salt
- [ ] 1 large egg
- [ ] 3 tbsp olive oil, for the dough
- [ ] 2 tbsp unsalted butter, for the topping
- [ ] ½ cup packed light brown sugar, for the topping
- [ ] 2 tbsp 2% milk, for the topping
- [ ] 0 tsp salt, for the topping
- [ ] ½ cup chopped pecans

Method

1. Stir the yeast into the warm milk. Put both flours, the sugar and the salt in a large bowl or a stand mixer, add the milk, egg and the 3 tablespoons of olive oil, and mix to a soft dough.

2. Knead 8 minutes in the mixer, or 10 by hand on a lightly floured counter, until smooth and a little tacky. Whole-wheat flour drinks more, and our flour is dry up here, so if it feels stiff, work in 1 tablespoon of milk.

3. Put the dough in a bowl brushed with olive oil, cover it and let it rise 45 to 60 minutes. Stop as soon as it has just doubled. A rise at 5,300 ft runs fast, and over-risen dough bakes up heavy.

- [ ] 1 tbsp olive oil, for the filling
- [ ] ¼ cup packed light brown sugar, for the filling
- [ ] 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- [ ] olive oil for the bowl and the pan

4 While it rises, check your candy thermometer: stand it in a pot of boiling water. A mile up it should read about 202 to 203 °F, not 212 °F. If it reads a degree or two off, move the target in the next step by the same amount.

5 Melt the topping butter with the brown sugar, milk and salt in a small heavy pot on medium, stirring until the sugar dissolves and the syrup boils. Clip on the thermometer and stop stirring. Boil until it reads 224 °F, the soft-ball stage at our altitude (234 °F at sea level). With no thermometer, drop a little into cold water: at soft ball it gathers into a soft ball. The syrup is a thin coat, not a deep pool.

6 Pour it at once into a 9-by-13-inch pan, brushed with a thin film of olive oil, and tilt the pan to spread it. Scatter the pecans over it and leave it to cool without stirring; stirring a cooling syrup makes it grainy.

7 Roll the dough out on the counter to about 12 by 16 inches. Brush it with the filling olive oil, then sprinkle on the brown sugar and cinnamon, leaving the far long edge bare.

8 Roll it up from the near long edge into a snug log and pinch the seam shut. With unflavoured dental floss or a serrated knife, cut 12 even slices.

9 Set the slices cut side down in the pan. Cover and let them puff for 30 to 45 minutes, until they touch each other. Heat the oven to 350 °F.

10 Bake 15 minutes. Tent the pan with foil and bake 10 to 15 minutes more, until deep golden and the middle of a bun reads 190 °F.

11 Cool 10 minutes, then loosen the edges and flip the pan onto a tray. Scrape any caramel left behind back over the buns. Serve warm.