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## Quick and Easy Brioche

Skip the sponge process and first rise, but still have a light, delicious pastry.

Challenge: Flaky, buttery, and readily adaptable to a variety of forms and accompanying flavors, brioche dough has long been a favorite of professional bakers. Most home bakers tend to shun this rich dough, however, because preparing it in the traditional method is very time-consuming. It requires waiting for a sponge to rise, mixing more flour into the sponge, waiting again for the resulting dough to rise, and chilling the dough -- until finally it is ready to use.

Solution: The process of making brioche dough may be considerably shortened, however, by eliminating the sponge in favor of a one-step mixing method and by shortening or eliminating the preliminary rising. Only the final rising before baking must be maintained, since it is essential to the texture and flavor of the pastry.

For Good Measure: If you don't have time to use the dough immediately, you can leave it in the refrigerator for up to twenty-four hours before shaping it, letting it rise, and baking, a factor that makes this dough even more convenient.

### QUICK BRIOCHE

1 envelope (about 2 1/2 teaspoons) active dry yeast  
1/2 cup warm milk (about 110 degrees)  
2 1/4 cups unbleached all-purpose flour  
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into  
6 pieces  
3 tablespoons sugar  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
2 large eggs

1. In small bowl, whisk yeast into milk, then stir in 1 cup of flour. Cover with plastic wrap and set aside.

2. Put butter, sugar, and salt in workbowl of food processor fitted with metal blade. Pulse at 1-second intervals, scraping sides of bowl several times, until mixture is soft and smooth. Add eggs, one at a time, and process after each addition until fully incorporated (even though mixture may look curdled). Add remaining 1 1/4 cups flour and yeast mixture from step 1, scraping sides of workbowl with rubber spatula. Pulse at 1-second intervals to form soft, smooth dough. Then process continuously for 15 seconds.

3. Turn dough (sticky at this point) out onto generously floured work surface and knead until smooth and elastic. Proceed with one of following recipes.

The fillings that follow may be used for the Brioche Ring. For a really simple filling, spread a scant cup of your favorite jam over the dough

before rolling it into a cylinder. The final pastry cream recipe can be used with the Raspberry Brioche Shortcake.

### ALMOND FILLING WITH CURRANTS

Makes enough for Brioche Ring

For the almond paste, you may substitute one-half cup of blanched almonds ground to a paste in the food processor along with one-quarter cup of sugar, one-half teaspoon of almond extract, and one teaspoon of water.

2/3 cup currants  
4 ounces almond paste, cut into 1/2-inch pieces  
1/4 cup sugar  
1 yolk, plus 1 egg  
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened  
1/4 cup flour

1. Cover currants with water in small saucepan. Bring to boil over medium heat, then immediately drain and spread currants on plate lined with paper towels.
2. Process paste and sugar in workbowl of food processor fitted with steel blade until combined. Add yolk, then egg, pulsing until smooth after each addition. Add butter; continue to pulse until smooth. Add flour; pulse until just absorbed. Transfer to small bowl, stir in currants, then refrigerate until ready to use.

### CINNAMON-WALNUT FILLING

Makes enough for Brioche Ring

1 cup toasted walnut or pecan pieces  
1/2 cup sugar  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1 egg, plus 1 yolk  
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened  
1/4 cup flour  
1/2 cup raisins or currants

1. Process 1/2 cup of the nuts to paste in workbowl of food processor fitted with steel blade. Add sugar; pulse to mix. Add cinnamon, egg plus yolk, butter, and flour; pulse until smooth.
2. Transfer to small bowl; fold in remaining 1/2 cup nuts and the raisins. Refrigerate until ready to use.

### ORANGE-FLAVORED CREAM CHEESE FILLING

Makes enough for Brioche Ring

1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese  
1/4 cup sugar  
1 egg

1 teaspoon zest from 1 small orange  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
2 tablespoons flour

Process cream cheese with sugar in workbowl of food processor fitted with steel blade until smooth. Add remaining ingredients; pulse until fully incorporated and smooth. Refrigerate until ready to use.

#### LIGHTENED PASTRY CREAM

Makes enough for Raspberry Brioche Shortcake

1/3 cup flour  
1/2 cup sugar  
Pinch salt  
1 1/2 cups milk  
4 egg yolks  
3 tablespoons orange liqueur  
3/4 cup heavy whipping cream

Mix flour, sugar, and salt in nonreactive saucepan. Whisk in milk, then yolks over medium-low heat. Whisk constantly until mixture thickens and comes to full boil, about 15 minutes. Remove from heat; whisk in liqueur. Transfer to medium nonreactive bowl and place plastic wrap directly over surface to keep skin from forming. Refrigerate until cold. Just before assembly of shortcake, whip cream to stiff peaks and fold into existing mixture.

Please click on the PDF, "Brioche Desserts," below, to view step-by-step illustrations for shaping the Brioche.