

BRIOCHE AUX AMANDES, BOSTOCK (Almond-Orange French Breakfast Toast)

Brioche Loaf:

4 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
¼ cup granulated sugar
1 ½ teaspoon instant yeast
½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, chilled, cubed
3 large eggs
½ cup tepid milk
1/3 cup tepid water

Eggwash: 1 egg yolk + 1 tablespoon milk (or cream, yogurt or sour cream)

Almond Cream Frangipane:

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
2/3 cup granulated sugar
¾ cup almond meal
2 teaspoons all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon cornstarch
1 large egg
1 teaspoon dark rum
½ -to- 1 teaspoon pure almond extract

Syrup:

2/3 cup granulated sugar
2/3 cup water
A few drops lemon juice
Zest of 1 large orange
1-to-2 tablespoons Amaretto almond liqueur OR Grand Marnier orange liqueur
½ -to- 1 teaspoon pure almond OR vanilla extract
Optional: pinch of ginger and mace

Sliced/shaved almonds

Powdered/icing sugar, to dust on top

Prepare brioche loaves. In a food processor, combine flour, salt, sugar and yeast; pulse to combine. Add butter and 3 eggs; process 10 seconds to coarse crumbs. With the processor running, add milk and water and pulse 30 seconds until very sticky batter-like dough is formed. If too dry, add 1-or-2 tablespoons water and process another 10 sec.

Scrape dough into a butter-greased bowl, top with a damp towel paper and cover tightly with plastic wrap. Set aside 2-4 hours until doubled in size.

Punch down dough, divide into two equal parts and shape into two loaves as follows: Form into a flattened rectangle, fold both long sides over to the middle as you pinch the seam closed, and fold under the short ends of the loaf. Repeat with the other half. Place each loaf centered into an 8"x4" buttered loaf pan as you press firmly. Cover with plastic; set aside 1-to-1 ½ hours.

*** Ideally, loaves should be baked in a "Brioche Mousseline. You could also use a Panettone lining or 4"-5" in diameter coffee cans lined with greased parchment paper to about twice the height of the can (filled 2/3 with dough).

Preheat oven to 400F for 20 min. Prepare eggwash.

Brush tops of loaves with eggwash, place evenly spaced on the center rack and bake 23-30 minutes until nicely browned. When done, the bottom will sound hollow when you tap it and the interior temperature will be at least 190 F on an instant-read thermometer. Cool completely on a wire rack.

Prepare almond cream. Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Mix in almond meal. Sift in flour and cornstarch; mix to combine. Add egg and mix until even and smooth. Add rum and extract. Chill for a while, covered, to firm up slightly; until ready to use.

Prepare syrup. In a small saucepan mix together sugar, water and lemon juice, bring to a boil and simmer until syrupy. Turn off heat. Add zest, liqueur, extract and spices if using. Set aside to cool.

Assemble Bostock. Slice loaves into 3/4"-to-1 ½" thick slices. Brush lightly with syrup. Spread 2-to-3 tablespoons almond cream heaped up in the middle of the toast and spread to edges, leaving a ¼" border. Top with almonds.

Bake in a 350F oven 12-20 minutes until puffy and golden. Cool on racks 8 minutes; dust with icing sugar. Serve warm or at room temperature.

*brioche recipe from How to Cook Everything by Mark Bittman, Macmillan Publishing, 1998

*almond cream recipe adapted from Baking: From My Home to Yours by Dorie Greenspan