



“German” Stollen

Making this bread is a tradition in our house & so is having some on Christmas morning, with coffee, sitting up in bed opening our Christmas stockings! It's not hard to make and while things are rising, you can decorate your house! For years I have been making two stollen for the parents of a very good friend, all of whom were born in Germany. My friend's father absolutely loved it because "It tastes exactly like the stollen I ate growing up in Germany! I think that is a great endorsement!

Makes 2 Large Stollen

About 1 week before you want to make the stollen combine the following in shallow glass pie plates or shallow bowls, cover with plastic wrap & place in the fridge to mature:

1 cup Thompson raisins
1/3 cup currants, rinsed with warm water & dried on paper towels
1/2 cup each: mixed peel, cut up glacé cherries & citron
1/4 cup dark rum

On Baking Day:

Make the Sponge:

1 1/3 cups + 1 1/2 tsp. lukewarm milk
1 1/2 tsp lukewarm water
1 1/2 tsp. sugar
1 packet or 2 1/4 tsp. regular/traditional yeast
1 1/3 cups unbleached flour

Stir together 1 1/2 tsp. lukewarm milk, 1 1/2 tsp. lukewarm water & 1 1/2 tsp. sugar in large bowl. Add the yeast & stir until smooth. Let stand until foamy, about 10 minutes. Add the flour & remaining 1 1/3 cups of lukewarm milk & mix well. (I heat the milk up just before I need it). The sponge will be very stiff. Cover & let sponge rise in a warm draft-free area until doubled in volume, about 1 hour & 15 minutes.

For the Dough:

3 1/2 cups + 3 Tbsp. unbleached flour (you may not need all of the 3 1/2 cups flour)
2/3 cups blanched silvered almonds
1 cup (8 oz.) unsalted butter, room temperature (but nice and soft)
1 cup sugar
2 eggs, room temperature
1 Tbsp. ground cardamom (also known as desiccated cardamom)

1 tsp. vanilla extract
1/2 tsp. salt

**** (Optional) but according to everyone, necessary, marzipan. (approximately 1/2 lb., room temperature) I recommend Odense brand from Denmark**

To Finish the Stollen:

3 – 4 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
1/2 cup each of icing sugar & berry sugar (aka castor sugar in the UK), combined in a small bowl

Make the Dough:

About 15 minutes before the sponge is ready, using a stand-mixer or hand-held electric mixer, beat the unsalted butter & sugar in a large bowl until light & fluffy. Beat in the eggs, cardamom, vanilla & salt. Beat in the sponge when it's ready, stir in the fruit & nuts & mix in enough remaining flour 1/2 cup at a time to form a slightly sticky dough. Turn dough onto a lightly floured surface & knead until smooth & elastic, about 10 minutes, adding more flour if very sticky. Toss the 3 Tbsp. flour with the raisins, slivered almonds & candied fruit in a medium bowl & quickly but thoroughly knead into the dough using a bench scraper to help fold the dough over the fruit & nut mixture.

Lightly oil a very large bowl. Add the dough, turning to coat the entire surface with oil. Cover bowl with plastic wrap. Let rise in a warm draft-free area until doubled in volume, about 2 1/2 hours. (I have made up a technique for this that works really well. (I set the bowl of dough over, not in, a pot of hot tap water). I have found by doing this my dough rises in 2 1/2 to 3 hours otherwise the dough is cold after the kneading & takes time to warm up & begin it's rise taking a lot longer. Just make sure the water is hot tap water, not boiling water and you only need 3" or so of water so the bowl of dough is suspended over, not in, the water.

Line two rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper folded to fit if necessary. Punch the dough down, divide in half; pat each half into a 10 x 6" oval. Roll the room temperature marzipan into a long rope approximately 3/4 to 1" in diameter. Lay the marzipan, lengthwise down the middle of the ovals of dough, then 1 side of the dough over top of the other, enclosing the marzipan inside. Pat each oval gently to flatten slightly; place on the prepared baking sheets; cover with a large towel and allow to rise in a warm draft free area until almost double in volume, about 2 hours.

Preheat the oven to 350 F.

Position the oven racks in the lower third of the oven (that's if you can comfortably fit both baking sheets on one rack, otherwise place the racks far enough apart so that the stollen can rise without touching the oven racks & bake on two racks, which is what I always do, switching the pans from the top to the bottom so they bake evenly. Bake until the loaves are golden & sound hollow when tapped on the bottom, about 1 hour. In the meantime melt a few tablespoons of butter & keep warm. Transfer the baked stollen to a rack & cool slightly, brush with the melted butter, then using a sieve, sift the sugars over top in a heavy layer.

Cool completely, then wrap in plastic wrap. Best served the next day or keeps very well in the fridge or you can freeze them too to get a head start on Christmas baking!

Phyllis

