DIY Hot Cross Buns

Our Bishop asked for ideas on how to make Easter special this year as we stay in our bubbles. What about making your own Hot Cross buns? It is an activity all your household can do together. Even younger children can get involved. With yeast leaving the shop shelves at a fast rate and some people not into kneading bread (or else wanting to eat the buns right now); I have given you 2 recipes below with some variations. One based on baking soda as the rising agent, similar to Irish soda bread and the other using baking powder similar to muffins. Both come complete with crosses and glaze. If you do want to go down the traditional yeast method there are many recipes on the internet

# First a bit of History

Contrary to popular opinion, hot cross buns were, historically eaten Easter day itself and not on Good Friday. At some point in the late 19th century or early 20th century people started to eat them on Good Friday solely based on the fact they had crosses on them. At the same time, the Good Friday fast and the midnight services also lost popularity. Before that point, this is how most celebrated Lent, Good Friday and Easter day. During Lent you were not supposed to eat eggs, butter, cream, sugar, spices and dried fruit or nuts, except for Feast days. The best hot cross buns contain all these ingredients. .On Good Friday morning you had breakfast, then put out all fires in your house, before heading off to church. For the rest of Friday and Saturday, with the exception of the elderly, the sick and very young, you fasted. On Saturday evening you prepared hot cross buns, so they were ready to go straight on the fire. You picked up your candles and headed out for the midnight service where you lit your candles from the Christ Candle. You carried you lit candles carefully home, kindling your own fires from them. Then you popped your already risen hot cross buns on the fire to enjoy before heading for bed.

# Hot cross buns

For both versions

1. Pre heat oven to 180\*C.
2. Line a muffin tin with squares of baking paper. You are using squares of paper so you can use the points to lift out the buns as soon as they are removed from oven so they can cool evenly on a cake rack. (it's also faster)

## For the crosses

* *Either* Place 3 tablespoons flour in a mug. Slowly add milk until right constancy is reached. It needs to be wet enough that it can be tipped off a spoon to give you the cross shape; but dry enough that they remain a straight line
* *0r* Cheat and use thin strips of ready rolled pastry

## For the Glaze

Heat up 1/3 of a cup of milk until just below boiling. Add 3 tablespoons of sugar and stir till dissolved. Brush over the buns. If you do not have a pastry brush simply drizzle it with a teaspoon.

## Buns with Baking Soda

N B this is a bread recipe so you want nuts and apricots lumpy but if too big they will sink to bottom of the bun. About the size of your little fingernail is about right

Sift together 4 cups flour 1 ½ teaspoons baking soda

 1 teaspoon salt 2 teaspoon mixed spice

 1 teaspoon cinnamon 1 teaspoon nutmeg

 ½ teaspoon cloves

Add 4 tablespoons sugar

Rub in 4 tablespoons butter

Add 1 cup raisins ¼ cup peel

 ½ cup chopped walnuts ½ cup diced apricots

Whisk together 1 large egg 1 ¼ cup milk

 ½ cup sour cream or yoghurt

Stir into dried ingredients. Fill muffin tins about ¾ full. Make the crosses. Glaze buns then cook 12 - 18 minutes. Time will vary due to humidity of the day and house temperature. They are cooked when they sound hollow when tapped. Your ear needs to be close to bun to properly hear the sound. Let cool slightly then enjoy buttered.

## Buns with baking powder

Sift together 3 ½ cups flour 4 teaspoons baking powder

 1 teaspoon mixed spice ½ teaspoon cloves

 1 teaspoon cinnamon 1 teaspoon nutmeg

Add 1 cup sugar 1 cup raisons

 ½ cup chopped apricot ½ cup chopped walnut

 1/3 cup peel

Whisk together 2 eggs ½ cup oil

 ¼ cup melted butter 1 teaspoon almond or vanilla essence

 ¾ cup milk ¼ cup yoghurt or sour cream

Stir into dry ingredients. ¾ fill muffin tins. Add crosses then glaze. Cook 15 mins. Cool on rack. Enjoy warm or cold.

# Variations

* Swop out some of the dried fruit and nuts for others
* Use different spices – all spice, ginger, cardamom, star anise
* Leave out all the spices. Soak 2 big pinches of saffron in 1 table spoon milk for 2 hours or overnight
* Use blanched almonds for forming the crosses
* Swop some of the milk for apple juice, some of the fruit for chopped apple and use apple juice in the crosses
* Use maple syrup for the glaze
* Be decadent and add ½ cup chocolate drops
* Be very decadent and replace ¼ of the fluid with rum

Both variations will freeze well when cooked. That is if there are any left over

But most of all enjoy spending time with each other.

Te pai me te rangimarie

Suzzarna