



Chocolate Hazelnut Babka

Makes: 2 loaves or 4 mini loaves

Prep Time: 30 minutes Cook Time: 50 minutes

Rise Time: 5 hours

Total Time: 6 hours 20 minutes

- 2 tbsp instant yeast
- 3/4 cup whole milk, heated to 110-115°F
- 6 tbsp unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 6 tbsp granulated sugar
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 4 egg yolks
- 3 1/3 cups (425 grams) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp salt or 1 1/2 tsp coarse kosher salt
- 1 egg, for egg wash
- 1 tbsp water, for egg wash
- 1 tbsp butter, melted

Filling:

- 2 cups hazelnuts
- 1 1/2 cups bittersweet chocolate, melted
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp salt

Glaze:

- 1/3 cup water
- 6 tbsp granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup hazelnuts, toasted and roughly chopped

To prepare the dough, place the warmed milk in a small bowl; sprinkle yeast over the milk and let stand for 5 minutes or until foamy. Stir to dissolve, if necessary.

Cream the butter and sugar together until smooth. In the bowl of a stand mixer with the paddle attachment, mix on medium speed for 1 to 2 minutes. In a separate bowl, add the oil

and vanilla to the egg yolks and whisk lightly to break up the yolks, then add the yolks to the sugar mixture in three portions, mixing until each is incorporated before adding the next.

Increase the mixer speed to medium-high until the mixture is fluffy, scraping down the sides of the bowl a couple of times during the process.

To the stand mixer on low, add the flour and salt, then pour in the milk mixture. Resume mixing at low speed to make a soft, supple, tacky dough.

Transfer the dough to a floured work surface and knead by hand for 2 minutes more, adding more flour as needed to make the dough pliable. The dough should be a beautiful golden color and feel soft and supple. Form the dough into a ball.

Place the dough in a clean, lightly oiled bowl, cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap, and leave at room temperature for about 2 1/2 hours or place it in the refrigerator overnight to be rolled out the next day. Enriched doughs do not always double in size because of the additional fat. Your dough should settle and have some rise before moving on to baking.

To prepare the filling, preheat the oven to 350°F. Place hazelnuts on a sheet pan and toast for 8-10 minutes, until fragrant. Once they are done, transfer nuts to a kitchen towel. Make a little package by pulling up the ends of the towel. Rub the hazelnuts together to get as much of the skins off as possible. Then, in a food processor, pulse hazelnuts to a rough chop. Add the melted chocolate, sugar and salt. Pulse to combine and then mix on high speed and process into a smooth paste.

To shape the dough, once the dough has risen, roll it into a 15 x 15-inch square on a lightly floured surface approximately 1/4-inch thick. Frequently lift the dough with a metal pastry scraper or bowl scraper and dust with more flour underneath to prevent sticking. Spread the chocolate hazelnut mixture over the dough, so the filling covers the surface of the dough evenly, leaving a 1/4-inch border. Roll up the dough like a jelly roll and place it seam-side down on the work surface. With firm but gentle pressure, rock the log back and forth to extend its length until it is 18-24 inches long. Transfer to freezer to chill, 10 minutes.

Prepare 2 9x5-inch loaf pans by brushing with melted butter. Cut the roll in half by width and then again lengthwise. Lay the strips cut side up and pinch and fold down the ends together. Lift one side of the split dough over the other side and gently braid. Place each twist into a prepared loaf pan.

Cover the loaf pans loosely with plastic wrap and let the dough rise at room temperature for 2 to 3 hours, until the babka fills the pans or has increased to about 1 1/2 times its original size. At this point, you can proceed directly to baking or refrigerate the babka overnight.

Preheat the oven to 350F.

If holding overnight, remove the dough from the refrigerator about 2 hours before you plan to bake it. Brush the top of the babka with the egg wash. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, then rotate the pan and bake until the top is a rich dark brown, another 20-25 minutes.

To prepare the glaze, heat the sugar and water to simmer until sugar dissolves. Set aside to cool.

Pour the glaze and sprinkle hazelnuts over the top of the warm babka and cool for 90 minutes before serving. The babka is best served at room temperature after the chocolate has had time to set.