



## Chocolate Babka

Makes 2 loaves

### Ingredients for Dough (from Epicurious)

- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup lukewarm whole or 2% milk (105–115°F)
- 2 tsp sugar
- 1 Tbsp active dry yeast
- 3  $\frac{1}{4}$  cups all-purpose flour plus additional for dusting - divided
- 2 whole large eggs
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 tsp pure vanilla extract
- $\frac{3}{4}$  tsp salt
- 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  sticks (10 Tbsp) unsalted butter, cut into pieces and softened

### Dough Instructions

Stir together warm milk and 2 teaspoons sugar in the bowl of a stand mixer. Sprinkle yeast over mixture and let stand until foamy, about 5 minutes. (If yeast doesn't foam, discard and start over with new yeast.)

Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup flour to yeast mixture and beat at medium speed until combined. Add whole eggs, yolk, vanilla, salt, and remaining  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar and beat until combined. Reduce speed to low, then mix in remaining 2  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups flour, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup at a time. Increase speed to medium, then beat in butter, a few pieces at a time, and continue to beat until dough is shiny and forms strands from paddle to bowl, about 4 minutes. (Dough will be very soft and sticky.)

Scrape dough into a lightly oiled bowl and cover bowl with plastic wrap. Let dough rise in a draft-free place at warm room temperature until doubled in bulk, 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 hours.

### Babka Filling Ingredients (From Smitten Kitchen and Ottolenghi's Jerusalem Cookbook)

- 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  ounces (130 grams) bittersweet chocolate (or approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup bittersweet chocolate chips)
- 1 stick (120 grams) unsalted butter, cold is fine
- Scant  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (50 grams) powdered sugar
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup (30 grams) cocoa powder

- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- ⅓ cup water (for topping)
- ⅓ cup granulated sugar (for topping)

### Filling Instructions

Melt butter and chocolate together until smooth. Stir in powdered sugar and cocoa; add cinnamon, if desired. This forms a paste that is easy to spread with an offset spatula.

### Assembly Instructions from Jerusalem Cookbook

Coat two 9-by-4-inch loaf pans with oil or butter, and cut parchment paper to line the bottom of each pan. Respray the top of this parchment once it is in the pan. Take half of dough from fridge (leave the other half chilled). Roll out on a well-floured counter or pastry silicone mat to about a 14-inch width (the side closest to you) and 10 inch length. I was generous with flour since the loaves were sticky, but the dough is great to work with and it doesn't break or crumble at all.

Spread half of chocolate mixture evenly over the dough with an offset spatula, leaving a tiny ½-inch border. Brush one of the long edges with water, and roll the dough up with the filling into a long, tight cigar. The water brushed side can now be pinched shut a bit. I found that transferring each log to a lightly floured baking tray in the freezer for 30 minutes made it much easier to cut cleanly in half later on. Repeat with second dough, transfer to the baking tray also for 30 minutes in the freezer.

To form the Babkas, remove the sheet containing the rolls from the freezer and transfer the parchment paper with the cold babka logs to the floured counter or mat and cut the last ½-inch off each end of log. Gently cut the log in half lengthwise and lay the two next to each other on the floured counter, cut sides up. Pinch the top ends gently together. Gently and loosely lift one side over the next, forming a twist and trying to keep the cut sides facing up. Then transfer the twisted log gently into the prepared loaf pan. It doesn't matter if the loaf is "squigly". You can place the trimmed ends of the log in the opening spaces available. No worries, the dough will fill in these gaps. Repeat this process with the next loaf.

Cover both pans with a damp tea towel and leave to rise another two hours at room temperature.

### Baking and Finishing Instructions

Preheat the oven to 375°F with the baking rack mid oven about 15 minutes before the two hours is up. At the end of two hours, remove damp towels covering the loaves and place both pans on the middle rack of your oven. Bake for 25-30 minutes. Mine cooked 27 minutes and might have been done in 25 min, but who knows? When ready to take from the oven, a toothpick will slide in easily and come out clean. If your babka needs more time, put it back, five minutes at a time then re-test.

Ten minutes before the loaves are finished baking, make the sugar syrup: Bring sugar and water to a simmer until sugar totally dissolves. Remove from heat and set aside to cool somewhat. As soon as the Babkas are done, brush the syrup all over the top of each loaf.

Use all the syrup. It will seem like excessive sugar syrup but will taste just right — glossy and moist. After ten minutes, shake the pans gently to be sure the sides are not sticking to the pan surface. Let cool 30 minutes in the pans - this is important because the yeast dough is springy and soft and fragile but not bad to handle after 30 minutes, then transfer to a cooling rack to cool the rest of the way before eating .

*Do ahead:* Babkas keep for a few days at room temperature. Or you can cool them absolutely completely, wrap in saran and heavy foil and freeze them for up to two months.