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HANSELL'S 29 FLAVOURING ESSENCES

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PREPARE FOR EASTER

BESIDES the hot cross buns, which you will make probably on Thursday and just pop into the oven on Friday morning to warm through, it is as well to have a supply of cakes and biscuits in the tins, so that one's mind may be comfortable when Easter visitors arrive. It is nice, too, to be able to take a contribution with us, when we ourselves are visitors.

Hot Cross Buns

These take very little time, or trouble, in actual mixing—it is the leaving to rise twice which makes the recipe look so long and complicated. A cooking demonstrator has reminded me that the secret of that soft fluffiness, which we all aim at in making hot cross buns, lies chiefly in the baking. Yeast buns must be cooked in the shortest time possible, in a good hot oven; and they must be taken out the very second they are cooked.

First Method (with a sponge)

Mix together a packet of compressed yeast and a dessertspoon of sugar until they liquefy; then add $\frac{1}{4}$ pint of luke warm milk. Have ready in a large mixing bowl 4oz. sifted flour: make a well in the middle and pour in the yeast mixture; mix to a smooth batter, beating until bubbly with a rotary beater; cover with a cloth and put to rise in a warm place, until double in size. Meanwhile sift together $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb. flour, 1 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon grated nutmeg, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon each of ground cloves and ginger; and rub in 4oz. or 5oz. of good shortening and 4oz. of sugar. Add a little shredded candied peel and $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. currants. Mix well. When the yeast mixture in the big bowl is ready, gradually stir into it this second mixture, adding also a beaten egg and another $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of luke warm milk. Knead this lightly for a few minutes, cover with cloth and leave in a warm place till risen to double in size—perhaps an hour. Then form into buns, arrange on lightly greased and floured oven trays, and leave to rise again (about $\frac{1}{2}$ hour). Make a cross on each, and bake in a hot oven. Brush over with a glaze made by dissolving a tablespoon of sugar in 2 tablespoons of milk and return to oven for a minute or two.

Second Method (no egg)

Three cups wholemeal (or 2 wholemeal and 1 white flour), $\frac{1}{2}$ cake compressed yeast, 1 tablespoon butter or good shortening cut up, 1 heaped tablespoon sugar, 1 teaspoon salt, 1 cup sultanas or currants, 1 large cup of luke warm milk (or milk and water), 1 teaspoon each of mixed spice and cinnamon. Mix together the yeast and sugar until they liquefy, then mix this, with the fat and salt, into the luke warm milk and water until smooth. Sift the flour and spices and mix in the fruit.

Pour in the liquid mixture and mix well, adding if necessary more luke warm liquid, to make a soft dough.

Cover with cloth and stand in a warm place to rise until double in bulk. Turn out on to floured board. Knead lightly for a few minutes. Form into buns, place them on greased oven shelf in warm place till again double in size (about $\frac{1}{2}$ hour). Brush with melted butter, sprinkle with cinnamon, mark with a cross, and bake in a hot oven. When cooked, brush over with sweetened milk and return to oven for a minute or two.

Third Method (quicker)

One pound of flour, $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. yeast, 1 level teaspoon powdered cinnamon, 2oz. mixed candied peel, 2oz. sultanas, pinch salt, 2 tablespoons sugar, 1 teaspoon mixed spice, 2oz. butter, 2oz. currants, $\frac{1}{2}$ pint milk, 1 egg. Sift flour with salt and spice. Rub in butter, and add the prepared fruit and sugar, keeping back half a teaspoonful of sugar to mix with the yeast. Mix yeast and sugar until liquid, then stir in the warm milk. Strain this mixture into the centre of the dry ingredients, and mix to a soft dough, adding the beaten egg. Turn out and divide into small portions. Shape into buns, then put on to a greased tin. Mark with a cross, and leave to rise until twice the size. Then bake in a hot oven. Brush over with sugar and milk when baked, and return to oven for two minutes.

Sim-nell Cake

This is the traditional English Easter cake. Old Simon and Nell could not agree as to whether the cake should be fruit or plain. So Nell compromised by putting a fruit cake mixture at the bottom of the tin, then a layer of almond paste, and then an equal quantity of plain cake mixture on top. (Trust a woman to manage!) Gradually, however, it came to be the custom to make only a good fruit cake mixture, putting half into the cake tin first, then the layer of almond paste, then the other half of the mixture; and baking. However, in Gloucestershire, they bake the whole cake first without any almond paste, and then next day split it open through the middle, spread each half thinly with apricot jam, and put it together again with a thick layer of almond paste between, in sandwich fashion. A thin spread of apricot jam and another round of almond paste goes on top of the cake. I think you can still buy packaged almond paste, but I will give a "mock" paste recipe, in case. The cake-mixture is 6oz. butter (or shortening), 6oz. sugar, 8oz. flour, 4 eggs (added one by one), $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. mixed fruit and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon mixed spice. Cream the fat and sugar and make as usual.

Mock Almond Paste

Half a pound of round wine biscuits (leave 2 out), 2 eggs, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. icing sugar, 2 teaspoons almond essence. Crush wine biscuits fine with rolling pin. Add icing sugar and beaten eggs and almond flavouring.