Ukrainian Paska (Easter Bread)

Ingredients

350ml milk
1 tablespoon sugar (15g)
2 teaspoon active dry yeast (7g)
800g bread flour
2¼ teaspoons salt (14g)
60g sugar
3 eggs
50g margarine
100g raisins (optional)
Cooking oil
1 teaspoon water
1 egg

Utensils

Hob
Small pan
Measuring jug
Measuring spoons
2 small cups
Scales
Sieve
Mixing bowl
Wooden spoon
Fork
Cling film
Loaf tin
Pastry brush

Method

Set the oven at 350F/175C gas mark 4.

Pour the milk into the pan and heat until warm to touch. Pour the milk into a small cup until it is half full (pour the rest back into the jug). Put a tablespoon of sugar in and stir until it is dissolved. Sprinkle the yeast on top and set aside for 5 – 10 minutes until the yeast turns bubbly.

Put the bowl on the scales, place the sieve on top and zero the scales. Weigh the flour and sift. Add the salt and sugar and stir well with a fork. Make a well in the centre.

Break an egg into a new cup and whisk. Add to the well and repeat for all three eggs.
When all three eggs have been added to the well, give a quick whisk with the fork, then add the yeast mixture. Stir until it is all mixed in and then slowly add the remaining jug of milk. Keep mixing and when it all starts to come together use your hands until all the flour is mixed in. (The dough should be wet and a little sticky.) Keep kneading for another 2 minutes)

Add the margarine and raisins and knead for another 7 minutes. (The dough should be getting less sticky and smoother.) If it is still sticky add a tablespoon of flour (You may need to add a couple but do one at a time.) Knead for another 2 to 3 minutes until the dough feels soft and pliable and a little glossy.

Roll into a ball and place in an oiled bowl, roll the ball in the bowl so all sides are covered and then cover with cling film. Leave to rise until doubled in size.

Remove the mixture from the bowl. Place it on a lightly floured surface and knead. Divide the dough into four. Lightly oil the bottom and sides of the loaf tins. Push ¼ of the dough into the bottom of the tin. With the remaining three pieces, using your hands roll into a rope shape. (Ensure all pieces are the same length and roughly twice the length of the tin) Pinch together the three ends and plait. Place the plait around the tin on top of the base. Cover with cling film and let rise until almost doubled.

Crack the egg into a cup and add the water. Beat together until all mixed together.
Using the pastry brush, brush over the top before placing in the oven.

Check after 20 minutes. Once the tops are browning, rapidly reduce the temperature to 325F/160C Gas Mark 3 and cover with tin foil. The bread is done when the internal temperature reaches 190F/88C

Remove from the oven and rest for 10 minutes in the pan, then remove and place on a cooling rack.