

#3 Speckled Bread



To call this desert BREAD is in my opinion a massive understatement. It's so much more than that - it's rich, fruity, moist and fragrant, yet incredibly easy to make. What goes by the name of **bara brith** in Wales and **barm brack** in Ireland, by most is simply known as **speckled bread** or tea fruit loaf. Dry fruit is soaked overnight in tea giving the bread a wonderful flavour and texture. It doesn't contain any butter (in fact, no fat at all) which makes it a fantastic dairy-free treat.

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large bowl make strong tea, wait for it to cool, then add the dry fruit and sugar. Stir well, cover and leave to soak overnight on the countertop. Next day grease and line the loaf tin.
2. Set the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas mark 4. In a separate bowl combine the flour and the ground mixed spice together. Stir the egg into the fruit mixture, then fold in the flour with the spices. Add the flaked almonds, if using. Mix well with a spoon or spatula for about one minute or until all ingredients are combined.
3. Pour the batter into the tin and level it off for an even shape. Bake for about 1 hour and 15 minutes until the bread is well risen and firm to the touch.
4. Meanwhile, on a low heat warm up the honey. About 5 minutes before the end of baking time, brush the top with the warm honey and return to the oven. Cool in the tin for 10 minutes, then remove and sprinkle with the reserved flaked almonds.

Cool again and put the kettle on! Best eaten with butter the next day when the flavours have infused. Who can wait that long though? Enjoy. :-)

INGREDIENTS

Makes a 1kg/2lb loaf, about 12-15 slices
(Tin about 24cm long, 13cm wide, 7cm high)

- 140g sultanas or currants + 140g raisins + 60g mixed peel (Or any other dry fruit, such as apricots, dates, cranberries - as long as it makes 340g fruit in total.)
- About 425ml very strong black tea (3 tea bags, no milk or sugar)
- 170g light brown soft sugar (can be substituted with caster, golden caster, granulated or demerara sugar) ***
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 340g self-raising flour
- 1 teaspoon mixed spice (or a bit more)
- 2 tablespoons of honey for glazing
- 50g flaked almonds (optional), set aside a handful for decoration

*** You can reduce the sugar without the risk of affecting the bread consistency.



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