

Raspberry Jam Buns with Crème Fraîche Frosting

MAKES 12 BUNS

When I was in high school, I took a weeklong bread baking intensive at the French Culinary Institute (now called the International Culinary Center). Not only did I feel like I had a better and closer understanding of my maternal grandparents, who ran a bread bakery in Brooklyn long before I was even a thought, I also learned so much about the chemistry behind baking, which helped me to overcome my fear of yeast. Prior to the course, anytime I saw yeast as an ingredient in a recipe, I turned the page. Yeast? It seemed over my head and too easy to mess up. What I can offer you in a condensed space is this: Don't be afraid. It's a tool, just like any other leavening ingredient (like baking powder). The other thing I learned, a true **small victory**, is that once you stop being afraid of yeast, mastering a basic yeasted dough, like the one I've included here, means that everything from cinnamon buns to dinner rolls is within your reach. This rendition employs raspberry jam, which is spread on top of the rolled-out dough so that when you roll it up and slice it, the jam is spiraled throughout the individual buns. Served with a generous amount of sweetened crème fraîche drizzled on top, this version is my personal favorite, but, as you'll see in the Spin-Offs, the possibilities are limitless.

¾ cup [180 ml] whole milk

2¼ tsp active dry yeast

2 eggs

**¾ cups [390 g]
all-purpose flour**

2 Tbsp granulated sugar

1 tsp kosher salt

**4 Tbsp [55 g] unsalted butter,
at room temperature**

⅔ cup [200 g] raspberry jam

¼ cup [30 g] powdered sugar

½ cup [115 g] crème fraîche

½ tsp vanilla extract

In a small saucepan over medium heat, warm the milk until it is body temperature (you can also use the microwave for this). Transfer the warm milk to a large bowl and stir in the yeast. Let the mixture sit until the yeast is dissolved and looks cloudy (almost like miso soup), about 5 minutes. A few bubbles on the surface is also a good sign that your yeast is ready.

Crack one of the eggs into a small bowl and beat with a fork. Add the beaten egg to the milk-yeast mixture, along with the flour, granulated sugar, salt, and butter. Use a wooden spoon to mix everything together until the dough starts to pull away from the sides of the bowl. (If after a minute or two of mixing it doesn't pull away from the bowl, add a little

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more flour, 1 Tbsp at a time, until it does. On the other hand, if the dough seems far too dry and impossible to mix, add a little more milk, 1 Tbsp at a time, until it becomes a little more forgiving. This is the nuanced part of baking where all the tiny variables—how humid the air is, how you measured your flour, etc.—all come into play. Don't worry too much and trust your instincts.)

Transfer the dough to a lightly floured work surface. Shape the dough into a large ball and knead it by pressing it with the heel of your hand and pushing it away from you, then immediately pulling it back, folding the top of the dough back on itself. Kneading is all about this push-and-pull. Turn the dough clockwise a little bit each time you push and pull it so that it gets evenly worked, and knead it until its surface is completely smooth and the whole thing feels both solid and soft at the same time, not unlike a baby's bottom (probably my favorite line in this book). It will take a solid 5 minutes of kneading.

Put the dough back in the large bowl and cover the bowl with plastic wrap. Let the dough sit in the warmest spot in your kitchen until it's soft and puffy and just about doubled in volume, about 1 hour.

Return the dough to the lightly floured work surface and use a floured rolling pin to roll it into a large ovalish rectangle measuring roughly 18 in [46 cm] long and 12 in [30.5 cm] wide. If the dough resists while you are rolling it, simply let it rest until it yields to the rolling pin; dough responds well to patience. Spread the surface of the dough evenly with the raspberry jam,

leaving a ½-in [12-mm] border. Starting from a long side, roll the dough up tightly so you end up with an 18-in [46-cm] rope. Cut the rope into a dozen even slices (I like to cut it in half and then cut each half in half, and so forth, so that it's easy to get even pieces). The ends might not have much jam—you can still add them to the bunch to make a baker's dozen.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Arrange the buns, spiraled-jam-side up, on the prepared baking sheet in relatively even rows. The buns should be touching each other but not shoving each other and the seams on the rolls should be facing inward in the "huddle" so that they don't unravel in the oven. Cover the buns loosely with plastic wrap and let rise at room temperature until they've risen a bit and are soft and puffy, about 1 hour. Or, so you can prepare them the night ahead, let them rise at room temperature for just 30 minutes, cover in plastic wrap, and refrigerate overnight. The next morning, pull them out and let return to room temperature, about 1 hour, before proceeding.

Meanwhile, preheat your oven to 350°F [180°C].

Crack the remaining egg into a small bowl and whisk it with 1 Tbsp water. Uncover the buns and brush them with the egg mixture (I use my hands for this so I get to be very gentle, achieve even coverage, and don't have to wash a brush afterward). Discard whatever egg mixture is left over (or save for another use such as a tiny omelet).

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Bake the buns until they're beautifully browned and the exposed jam is caramelized, 25 to 30 minutes.

While the buns are in the oven (ha!), in a small bowl, whisk together the powdered sugar, crème fraîche, and vanilla.

Drizzle the hot buns (yeow!) with the crème fraîche mixture—this should be a wonderfully messy moment. Serve immediately (an even more wonderfully messy moment). These buns are best served warm out of the oven rather than at room temperature.

If you know you will have extra buns, don't top them with the crème fraîche. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for a couple of days or wrap tightly in plastic and freeze for up to 1 month (thaw at room temperature). Warm in a 350°F [180°C] oven for 10 minutes. Top the warmed buns with the crème fraîche mixture and serve.

SPIN-OFFS

FOR CINNAMON ROLLS, instead of spreading the dough with raspberry jam, sprinkle the surface evenly with a thin layer of brown sugar and shake over a very thin dusting of cinnamon, then roll it up and proceed as instructed. Substitute cream cheese for the crème fraîche in the frosting mixture.

FOR TERRIFIC GARLIC BUNS, instead of spreading the dough with raspberry jam, brush it with ½ cup [110 g] melted butter and then sprinkle over six minced garlic cloves, a generous sprinkle of salt, and a handful of finely chopped parsley. Roll up the dough and proceed as instructed. Skip the frosting!

FOR HERB-GOAT CHEESE BUNS, instead of spreading the dough with raspberry jam, dot it with 8 oz [230 g] plain goat cheese and sprinkle over a small handful of finely chopped thyme, rosemary, and/or sage. Roll up the dough and proceed as instructed. Skip the frosting!

FOR MONKEY BREAD, divide the dough into a dozen even pieces and roll each piece in melted butter and then in cinnamon-sugar (this will be a messy job, very well suited for children). Pack the pieces into a loaf pan, cover with plastic wrap, and let rest and rise for 1 hour. Uncover it, brush with beaten egg, and bake in a 350°F [180°C] oven until golden brown, about 20 minutes.

FOR SALAMI OR PROSCIUTTO BREAD, instead of spreading the dough with raspberry jam, shingle 4 oz [115 g] thinly sliced salami or prosciutto over it. Roll up the dough, *don't slice it*, and let it rest and rise for 1 hour, then brush the loaf with the egg and bake it. Thinly slice it while it's warm. So good!

FOR BUTTERY DINNER ROLLS, divide the dough into a dozen evenly sized pieces and form each into a little ball by rolling it between your hands. Transfer the balls to a parchment paper-lined baking sheet, arranging them so that they're touching each other. Cover with plastic and let them rest and rise for 1 hour. Uncover, brush with egg, and bake in a 350°F [180°C] oven until golden brown, about 20 minutes. Brush with melted butter instead of frosting.