

BUNNY BUNS

Ingredients:

Yeast Mixture:

1/2 cup whole milk
4 1/2 teaspoons active dry yeast (two 1/4-ounce packages)
pinch granulated sugar
pinch all-purpose flour

Buns:

1/3 cup (5 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon) unsalted butter, melted, plus more for the bowl and baking dish
1 1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
1 large egg plus 1 yolk
3 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
1/2 cup granulated sugar
3/4 teaspoon fine salt
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
1/2 cup raisins
24 mini chocolate chips

Glaze:

1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
1 1/2 teaspoons whole milk
1/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
1 drop light pink gel food coloring
1/4 cup shredded coconut



Directions:

For the yeast mixture: Combine the milk and 1/2 cup water in a medium saucepan and warm over low heat until about 100 degrees F (do not heat above 110 degrees F). Remove the pan from the heat and sprinkle the yeast, sugar and flour over the surface of the liquid. Set aside without stirring until foamy and rising up the sides of the pan, about 30 minutes.

For the buns: Whisk the butter, vanilla and egg yolk into the yeast mixture. Whisk together the flour, sugar, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg and ginger in a large bowl. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture and stir in the yeast mixture with a wooden spoon to make a thick, shaggy and slightly sticky dough. Stir in the raisins. Turn the dough out onto a generously floured work surface and knead until soft and elastic, about 8 minutes. Shape into a ball.

Grease the inside of a large bowl with butter. Put the dough in the bowl, turning to coat lightly with the butter. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise at room temperature until doubled in size, about 1 hour 30 minutes. (If you have a marker, trace a circle the size of the dough on the plastic and note the time to help you keep track.)

Lightly butter a 9-by-13-inch baking dish.

To form the rolls: Pat and roll the dough with a rolling pin into a 14-by-10-inch rectangle. Cut off a 2-inch-wide strip of dough across the short side and set aside. (If the remaining dough has sprung back a bit, pat it back out to a 12-by-10-inch rectangle.) Cut the large dough rectangle in half lengthwise, then cut each smaller rectangle into six 5-by-2-inch pieces, for a total of 12 pieces. Gather each piece and roll into a tight oval-shaped ball, closing any seams as best you can. Arrange in the prepared baking dish in 3 rows of 4, with any remaining seams tucked under.

Cut the reserved strip of dough into 24 pieces for the ears. Roll each piece into a 3-inch log, fold in half and pinch the ends together to form an ear. Pinch 2 ears together so they look slightly like a heart. Repeat with the remaining logs to make 12 sets of ears. Hold each set of ears from the front where the ears come to a point and pinch them onto the front third of a dough round to secure. Cover with plastic wrap and let sit at room temperature until doubled in size, about 45 minutes. (A small indent will remain in the dough if you poke it with your finger.)

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Beat the remaining whole egg with 1 tablespoon water in a small bowl. Remove the plastic wrap and brush the tops of the dough balls and ears with the egg wash.

Bake the rolls until very golden brown and puffy, 22 to 25 minutes. Let cool for 20 minutes, then insert 2 mini chocolate chips beneath each set of ears for the bunnies' eyes.

For the glaze: Stir together the confectioners' sugar, milk, vanilla and lemon zest in a bowl until smooth. Transfer half of the glaze to a small piping bag or resealable plastic bag and make a small cut in the corner. Add the pink food coloring to the remaining glaze and stir to combine. Transfer the pink glaze to a small piping bag. Pipe the pink icing inside of the ears. Pipe a big dollop of white glaze where the bunnies' tails would be. Cover the white icing with the shredded coconut.