

A basket of freshly made bread on a table seems to tell people that you care. Whether it's a wedding or a mid-day family dinner, it is always appreciated. Over the years, I've tweaked several different bread recipes, so that I can bake them efficiently, with consistent results. This bread has a fine crumb, and is absolutely beautiful in colour. If you want to serve a more elegant bread, simply leave out the pumpkin seeds. This time of year, when we really are reaffirming that we do, in fact, care about those around us, take the time to share bread.

Once bread is cooled to room temperature, freeze in well-sealed plastic bags for up to a month. Try to get out as much air as possible. Let thaw for about 6 hours, before serving. Although it won't be hot, it will be very fresh tasting.

I use my Kitchen Aid mixer with the dough hook, but there's no reason you can't make this with hand kneading.

Pumpkin Cardamom Bread

Makes 3 loaves

Ingredients:

1 T yeast

½ c warm water

1 T molasses

1 c warm milk (not hot, just warm – this is so the yeast won't be stopped in its tracks by the addition of cold liquid)

1 c pumpkin (grow your own, bake, scrape and mash, or use tinned)

¼ c olive oil

5½ - 6 c flour

1½ t salt

1 T ground cardamom

½ c pumpkin seeds

1 egg yolk

dash of salt

dash of sugar

1 t water

Directions:

In a large bowl, mix the yeast with the warm water & molasses.

When the yeast has foamed (or proven), slowly whisk in the olive oil, warm milk and pumpkin.

Add in 2 c of flour, whisk until combined.

Add in the salt & cardamom, whisk until combined.

Gradually add in the remaining flour, while kneading. You'll want to be careful adding the last ½ c or so of flour, as it may not be necessary. The dough should be pulling cleanly away from the sides of the bowl.

Put in an oiled bowl, covered with plastic wrap or a damp towel.

Let rise for an hour, or until doubled.

Punch down, remove and knead for a couple of minutes.

Cut the dough into 3 equal pieces. Each will weigh just over a pound.

Form into 3 oblong loaves.

Place on a large baking sheet that is lightly oiled, and sprinkled with corn meal.

Cover loosely with plastic wrap or a very slightly damp towel.

Preheat oven to 375 °

Let rise until doubled.

Mix together the egg yolk with the salt, sugar and water.

Using a pastry brush spread the glaze evenly over the risen loaves. You won't need it all.

Slash the loaves 3 times each.

Bake for 30 minutes in the center of the oven.

Cool on racks.