

HOT CROSS BUNS

Ingredients

For the buns

- 300ml whole milk, plus 2 tbsp more
- 50g butter
- 500g bread flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 75g icing sugar
- 1 tbsp sunflower oil
- 7g packet fast-action or easy-blend yeast
- 1 egg, beaten
- 75g sultanas or currents
- 50g mixed peel
- zest 1 orange
- 1 apple, peeled, cored and finely chopped
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon

For the cross

- 75g plain flour, plus extra for dusting

For the glaze

- 3 tbsp apricot jam

Method

1. Bring the milk to the boil, then remove from the heat and add the butter. Leave to cool until it reaches hand temperature. Put the flour, salt, sugar and yeast into a bowl. Make a well in the centre. Pour in the warm milk and butter mixture, then add the egg. Using a wooden spoon, mix well, then bring everything together with your hands until you have a sticky dough.
2. Tip on to a lightly floured surface and knead by holding the dough with one hand and stretching it with the heel of the other hand, then folding it back on itself. Repeat for 5 mins until smooth and elastic. Put the dough in a lightly oiled bowl. Cover with oiled cling film and leave to rise in a warm place for 1 hr or until doubled in size and a finger pressed into it leaves a dent.

3. With the dough still in the bowl, tip in the sultanas, mixed peel, orange zest, apple and cinnamon. Knead into the dough, making sure everything is well distributed. Leave to rise for 1 hr more, or until doubled in size, again covered by some well-oiled cling film to stop the dough getting a crust.
4. Divide the dough into 15 even pieces. Roll each piece into a smooth ball on a lightly floured work surface. Arrange the buns on one or two baking trays lined with parchment, leaving enough space for the dough to expand. Cover (but don't wrap) with more oiled cling film, or a clean tea towel, then set aside to prove for 1 hr more.
5. Heat oven to 425 degrees. Mix the flour with about 5 tbsp water to make the paste for the cross – add the water 1 tbsp at a time, so you add just enough for a thick paste. Spoon into a piping bag with a small nozzle. Pipe a line along each row of buns, then repeat in the other direction to create crosses. Bake for 20 mins on the middle shelf of the oven, until golden brown.
6. Gently heat the apricot jam to melt, then sieve to get rid of any chunks. While the jam is still warm, brush over the top of the warm buns and leave to cool.