

Potato and Rye Vienna Twist

This is a humble name for a spectacular and delicious bread from Austria, where it is known as *Verheiratesbrot*. Two distinctly different doughs, one a creamy potato with anise seed and the other a beer rye uniquely flavored with ground coriander, are twisted together to form a two-tone earth-colored bread. It is adapted from a recipe developed by master baker Diane Dexter of the East Bay's Metropolis Bakery. I was her assistant at a cooking demonstration for the San Francisco Food Society and was just entranced at the two doughs and how spectacular it was baked. When I learned this recipe, I loved the flavor so much that I even stashed a few slices in my pockets to make toast the next morning.

Yield: 2 long twists

Rye Dough

2 teaspoons active dry yeast
1/2 cup warm water (105° to 115°)
1 cup flat beer, heated slightly to burn off some of the alcohol
1 tablespoon barley malt syrup
1 egg
1-1/2 teaspoons salt
1 tablespoon ground coriander
1 cup medium rye flour
3 cups unbleached all-purpose or bread flour

Potato Dough

One 6-ounce russet potato, skin on and cut into large chunks
1-1/2 teaspoons active dry yeast
1/4 cup warm potato water (105° to 115°)
7/8 cup warm milk (105° to 115°)
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 tablespoon sugar
1 egg
1-1/2 teaspoons whole aniseed
1-1/2 teaspoons salt
3-1/2 to 3-3/4 cups unbleached all-purpose or bread flour

1. To make the rye dough: In a large bowl, sprinkle the yeast over the warm water and stir until smooth. Add the warm beer, malt, egg, salt, spice, and rye flour. Beat with a whisk until smooth, about 1 minute. Add all the unbleached flour at once and beat with a wooden spoon to make a smooth dough that clears the sides of the bowl, about 3 minutes. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth and springy, about 10 kneads. Add no more flour, this dough is soft.

Place the rye dough in a greased deep container and turn once to coat the top. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise at room temperature until doubled in bulk, about 1-1/2 hours.

2. In a medium saucepan, cover the potato chunks with water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, and cook until tender, about 20 minutes. Drain, reserving 1/4 cup of the potato water. Let the water cool to warm, 105° to 115°. Meanwhile, peel the potato and puree with a food mill or electric mixer to make 2/3 cup.

3. To make the potato dough: In a large bowl, sprinkle the yeast over the warm potato water and stir until smooth. Add the potato puree, milk, butter, sugar, egg, aniseed, salt, and 1 cup of the flour. Beat with a whisk until smooth, about 1 minute. Add 2-1/2 cups more unbleached flour and beat with a wooden spoon to make a smooth dough that clears the sides of the bowl, about 3 minutes. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth and springy, about 10 kneads, adding flour 1 tablespoon at a time as necessary to prevent sticking.

Place the potato dough in a greased deep container and turn once to coat the top. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise at room temperature until doubled in bulk, about 1 hour.

4. Turn the doughs out onto a lightly floured work surface. Divide each dough into 2 equal portions. Roll each piece into a log about 14 inches long. Lay 1 log each of rye and potato dough side by side and pinch the ends together. Twist each log and wrap around each other with 4 or 5 turns. Pinch the ends and tuck them under. Place the loaf on a greased or parchment-lined baking sheet, arranging the loaf so that it is neat and even. Repeat to form a second twist. Cover loosely with plastic wrap and let rise until almost doubled, about 40 minutes. Twenty minutes before baking, preheat the oven to 450° if using a baking stone, or 400° without a stone.

5. Mist the loaves with water and sieve them all over with 1 to 2 tablespoons of unbleached flour. Reduce the oven temperature to 400° if using a baking stone, and bake in the preheated oven for 35 to 40 minutes, or until golden brown and crusty. Cool on racks before slicing.