

## **Great Aunt Anna's Irish Soda Bread**

3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour  
1/4 cup light brown sugar  
1 tablespoon baking powder  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon salt  
4 tablespoons cold unsalted butter or margarine, cut into pieces  
1 1/2 cups combination golden raisins and tart dried cherries, or finely chopped mixed dried fruit, or all dark or golden raisins  
1 to 1 1/4 cups cold buttermilk  
1 large egg  
1 large egg yolk

Preheat the oven to 400°. Parchment-line a baking sheet.

In the work bowl of a heavy duty stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Add the butter pieces on low speed and mix just until soft, thick crumbs are formed.

Add the dried fruit, then 1 cup of the buttermilk, the whole egg, and egg yolk. Mix on medium-low speed until the dough forms a rough, soft mass. Adjust the consistency with a few more tablespoons of buttermilk, if necessary. You want the dough to be able to hold its own shape, yet still be soft and pliable.

Turn the dough out of the mixing bowl onto a lightly floured work surface and knead gently, sprinkling with flour as needed to prevent sticking, until the sticky dough just comes together and makes a smooth surface, no more than 5 to 10 times. You can leave the dough quite soft or a bit stiffer, depending on the density you like your soda bread.

Divide the dough into 2 equal portions with a knife, and knead each a few times to make a smooth round. Do not overwork the dough. Dust 2 tablespoons of flour on the work surface and roll the top surface of the loaves in the flour to coat.

Place the loaves on the baking sheet about 6-inches apart and double pan by placing another baking sheet of the same size underneath to prevent burning. With a small sharp knife or kitchen shears, slash the tops with a large X about 1/2-inch deep. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until dark brown and crusty. A cake tester inserted into the center of the X will come out clean. Serve, cut into thick slices with a serrated bread knife, warm or room temperature. Makes great toast, crunchy just like an English muffin. Serve with butter, and jam, apple butter, or lemon curd. Freeze in a large plastic freezer bag, whole or in slices, up to 1 month.

Makes 2 round loaves

Seeded Irish Soda Bread

Omit the dried fruit and add 1 1/2 tablespoons caraway seeds.