

Pan de muerto "Bread of the Dead"

This bread is often shaped into skulls or round loaves with strips of dough rolled out and attached to resemble bones.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/2 cup water
- 5 to 5 1/2 cups flour
- 2 packages dry yeast
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon whole anise seed
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 4 eggs

In a saucepan over medium heat, heat the butter, milk, and water until very warm, but not boiling.

Meanwhile, measure out 1 1/2 cups flour and set the rest aside. In a large mixing bowl, combine the 1 1/2 cups flour, yeast, salt, anise seed, and sugar. Beat in the warm liquid until well combined. Add the eggs and beat in another cup of flour. Continue adding more flour until dough is soft, but not sticky. Knead on a lightly floured board for ten minutes until smooth and elastic.

Lightly grease a bowl, place dough in it, cover with plastic wrap, and let rise in a warm place until doubled in bulk, about 1 1/2 hours. Punch the dough down and shape into loaves resembling skulls, skeletons, or round loaves with "bones" of dough placed ornamentally on the top. Let these loaves rise for 1 hour.

Bake in a preheated 350° oven for 40 minutes. Remove from oven and paint on glaze.

Glaze:

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup fresh orange juice
- 2 tablespoons grated orange zest

Bring to a boil for 2 minutes, then apply to bread with a pastry brush.

If desired, sprinkle colored sugar on glaze while it is still damp.