

Apple and Honey Babka

Recipe from Sarah Amouyal

Adapted by Joan Nathan

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Total Time	About 2½ hours, plus 3½ hours rising
Prep Time	20 minutes
Cook Time	2 hours, plus 3½ hours rising and 10 minutes cooling
Rating	★★★★★ (15)

Similar in taste to my late mother-in-law's homey Polish apple cake but a bit chewier and less sweet, this babka can be served as a dessert or breakfast treat. It comes from Sarah Amouyal, co-founder and co-owner of Babka Zana, a bakery in Paris with a nod to North African and Ashkenazi Jewish baking traditions. Unlike many other babkas today, it still has the feeling of old Europe in its simplicity. Make it for breakfast as I did, in a traditional loaf, or twist it into four smaller round buns to be shared when sipping coffee, as Ms. Amouyal does. What I especially like about this babka recipe is that it can be assembled one day and baked off the next. The cold, long rest in the refrigerator helps the dough rise more slowly, giving it time to develop flavor, while also making the babka easier to work with. Add a half teaspoon or so of cinnamon to the apples if you must. —**Joan Nathan**

INGREDIENTS

Yield: 1 babka cake (6 to 8 servings) or 3 to 4 babka buns

½ cup/118 milliliters whole milk,
heated to lukewarm (100 to 110
degrees)
2 ¼ teaspoons/7 grams active dry
yeast (1 packet)

PREPARATION

Step 1

In the bowl of a stand mixer, stir together the lukewarm milk with the yeast and 2 tablespoons of the sugar and set aside until foamy, about 10 minutes.

Step 2

Meanwhile, cut 5 tablespoons of the butter into small cubes and set aside.

Step 3

6 tablespoons/75 grams
granulated sugar, divided

7 tablespoons/99 grams unsalted
butter, at room temperature,
divided, plus more for greasing the
pan

1 large egg, lightly beaten, plus 1
egg for the egg wash

2 ¼ cups/288 grams all-purpose
flour, plus more as needed

¾ teaspoon fine salt

4 cups peeled, diced apples (cut
into ½-inch cubes), from 3 medium
apples/about 1½ pounds total, see
Tip

3 tablespoons honey

Stir the beaten egg into the yeast mixture, then attach the dough hook and add the flour and salt. Mix on medium speed until a dough forms, about 2 minutes, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. While the mixer is running, gradually add the softened butter cubes, mixing until each piece of butter is absorbed before adding the next. Adjust the mixer to low speed and continue to mix until the dough pulls away from the sides of the bowl and is pillowy and stretchy, about 10 minutes more.

Step 4

Transfer the dough to a large bowl, cover with a damp cloth or plastic wrap and let rise in a warm, draft-free place for 1 hour until the dough has almost doubled in size. Then put the bowl in the fridge and refrigerate at least 1½ hours or up to overnight.

Step 5

While the dough is rising at room temperature, in a medium saucepan (preferably heavy-bottomed) over medium-high heat, melt the remaining 2 tablespoons of butter and stir in the remaining 4 tablespoons of sugar. After about 2 minutes, when the sugar starts to caramelize, add the apples and honey. Cook for 8 to 10 minutes, stirring often, until the apples are tender and any liquid is reduced. (If the pan starts to look dry, reduce the heat to medium and cover the pan.) Transfer the apples to a bowl and refrigerate until chilled, a few hours or up to overnight.

Step 6

Butter an 8½-by-4½-inch loaf pan. Lightly flour your work surface and rolling pin and roll the dough into a 12-by-16-inch rectangle, with one of the long sides facing you.

Step 7

Using a slotted spoon if the apples have released liquid, transfer the apple filling to the dough, scattering evenly and gently pressing the apples into the dough, leaving about a 1-inch border. Roll up gently into a long jelly roll or log. Transfer the log of dough seam-side down to a large floured cutting board, then use a sharp knife to gently but firmly halve the log lengthwise, revealing the layers of apple.

Step 8

Arrange the two half-logs, cut-sides up, so they form an X. Working with one side at a time on either side of the center of the X, twist the half-logs together starting in the center and working

toward the ends, keeping the cut sides of dough facing up. Pinch the ends on both sides to seal, then tuck the skinny ends under the babka. Nestle the babka into the loaf pan, cover with a damp cloth, and let the babka rise for 45 minutes to an hour in a warm place, or up to overnight in the fridge (it will puff up slightly).

Step 9

When ready to bake, heat the oven to 350 degrees. In a small bowl, briefly beat the remaining egg, and then brush over the top of the babka. Bake for 45 to 50 minutes, until the babka is golden brown and a cake tester inserted in the middle comes out clean. (If the babka isn't yet cooked through, tent with foil if needed to prevent overbrowning and bake for 10 to 20 minutes more.)

Step 10

Remove from the oven and let cool for at least 10 minutes before turning the babka out of the pan. (If the babka clings to the pan, run a table knife around the edges to loosen any apple bits.) Slice and serve warm.

TIPS

Seek out a flavorful apple that holds its shape when baked. If you can't find Envy, GoldRush, Pippin or Stayman varieties, Honeycrisp is a good alternative that's easily available at supermarkets. And remember to start by biting into one of the apples to see if it's flavorful enough to use.

If desired, you can freeze the assembled, risen but unbaked babka in its baking pan for up to 1 month, well wrapped. Leave out the frozen babka for an hour at room temperature before brushing with egg wash and baking as instructed.

Private Notes

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