

Chocolate Hazelnut Babka

This yeast bread has similarities to brioche but is rolled thin, paired with chocolate, twisted in a double braid, and topped with a chocolate or syrup glaze. Though appearing complicated, babka is surprisingly simply to make with endless possibilities for fillings and toppings. Use the Folding Proofer during the final rise to give this loaf enough lift for a beautiful layered look when sliced.

Yield: One loaf.

Timing: Start this bread about 10 hours before serving.



Dough

Ingredients	Volume	Grams	Ounces	Baker's %
Whole milk, slightly warm	½ C	100	4	0%
Sugar, fine	1 tsp	4	0.14	1.5%
Instant yeast	2 tsp	6	0.2	2.3%
Unbleached all-purpose flour	2 C	260	15.8	100%
Salt, fine	1 tsp	6	0.21	1.9%
Large egg	1	60	2	0%
Unsalted butter, cut into six pieces	6 T	90	3	0%

Filling

Ingredients	Volume	Grams	Ounces
Unsalted butter	7 T	100	3.5
Sugar, fine	½ C	100	3.5
Bittersweet chocolate, coarsely chopped	½ C	80	3
Cocoa powder, unsweetened natural	5 T	40	1.4
Espresso powder	½ tsp	3	0.1
Cinnamon	½ tsp	3	0.1
Hazelnuts* toasted & coarsely chopped	½ C	65	2.1

*optional: substitute almonds or walnuts

Syrup Glaze Topping

Ingredients	Volume	Grams	Ounces
Water	¼ C	59	2
Sugar, fine	¼ C	50	1.8
Honey	1 T	21	0.75

Chocolate Glaze Topping *(optional to use instead of syrup glaze topping)*

Ingredients	Volume	Grams	Ounces
Bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped	⅓ C	57	2
Milk chocolate, finely chopped	⅓ C	57	2
Unsalted butter	6 T	85	3
Corn syrup, light	1 T	20	0.75

Equipment: Brød and Taylor Folding Proofer & Slow Cooker, stand mixer (optional), rolling pin, 8½ x 4½" / 21.5 x 11.5 cm loaf pan, and 8" x 12" / 30 x 50 cm parchment.

Mixing the First Four Ingredients. In a medium bowl or the stand mixer bowl, mix the yeast with milk and sugar and about a quarter of the flour.

Making the Main Dough.

By Hand: Combine butter with ingredients in the bowl and mix. Add the egg and salt and combine well. Gradually add the flour until it is evenly incorporated. Turn dough onto lightly floured surface and knead until smooth, about 8 minutes.

By Stand Mixer: Using a mixer fitted with a dough hook on low speed, combine butter with the ingredients in the bowl, and then add the egg and salt. Mix to combine. Gradually add the flour until it is completely incorporated. Turn the mixer to medium-high speed and knead until the dough is smooth, about 5 minutes. The dough should pull away from the sides of the bowl.

Refrigerating the Dough. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap for 6-12 hours and place in the refrigerator. Another option is to skip the refrigeration and roll out dough following the instructions below. However, dough often improves with a rest and rise period; the refrigeration is thus highly recommended.

Preparing Proofer and Pan. When refrigeration time is complete, set the Proofer to 80 °F / 27 °C and place the water tray in the middle of the warming plate in the base of the Proofer. Pour ¼ C / 60 ml water into the tray and place the rack on top of the tray. Generously grease the sides and bottom of the loaf pan. Cut a piece of parchment to line the long sides and bottom of the pan overhanging the two long sides. This will help you easily lift the loaf from the pan when it is finished baking.

Making the Filling. Melt the 7 T / 100 g of butter in a small saucepan. Add sugar and stir until almost completely dissolved. Remove from heat and add the bittersweet chocolate. Let stand 1 minute and then stir slowly until chocolate is melted and smooth. Add the cocoa powder, espresso powder, and cinnamon. Stir slowly to combine. Set aside to cool to room temperature.

Rolling out Dough. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and roll the dough out to a rectangle about 12 x 20" / 30 x 50 cm. If the dough contracts and resists when rolling, cover lightly with plastic wrap and allow the partially rolled out dough to rest 5-10 minutes. After the dough has relaxed, continue to roll it out to the final dimensions.

Spreading the Filling on Dough. Spread the filling over the surface of the dough and all the way to the edges. If using nuts, sprinkle the toasted and coarsely chopped nuts over the chocolate filling. Starting on one of the long edges of the dough, roll up tightly into a log that is 20" / 50 cm long.

Shaping the Babka. Using a sharp and floured knife, slice the dough completely in half lengthwise. Lightly re-flour the knife before each cut. Roll the two lengths so that the cut sides face up. Overlap the end of one cut half over the other with the cut sides still facing up. Next take the other cut half and lay it over the other, taking care that the cut sides are always facing up. Continue making twisted rope-like dough, overlapping and twisting the two halves of the dough together into one piece of twisted dough. If any filling or nuts fall out, just place them in the bottom of your prepared loaf pan.

Transferring to Pan. Shape the loaf by gently and slowly pressing on the ends, while keeping the loaf twisted at a consistent thickness. Carefully lift and place into the prepared pan.

Proofing the Babka Dough. Place the babka loaf in the Proofer and allow it to rise for 2 hours until puffy and almost doubled in size.

Preparing to Bake. After about 1.5 hours of the proofing time, place a baking rack in the bottom third of the oven with ample room above for the loaf to rise. Preheat the oven to 375 °F / 190 °C.

Baking the Babka. Bake on the middle rack for 25-30 minutes. (*If choosing syrup glaze topping, prepare while babka is baking.*) Test whether the loaf is fully cooked by inserting a skewer into the center to check whether it comes out clean. Try to insert the skewer primarily into the dough, instead of the filling—there may be some bits of chocolate filling clinging to the skewer. Remove from oven, leave loaf in the pan, and place on a cooling rack.

Making the Topping. Select one of the two babka topping choices below:

Syrup Glaze Topping: This topping can be prepared *while babka is baking in the oven*. Bring the water, sugar, and honey to boil in a small saucepan and allow slowly boiling for about 2 minutes. Stir and remove any foam that rises to the surface with a spoon. Remove from the heat and set aside. After the babka has baked and is still slightly warm in the pan, spoon or brush the room temperature syrup topping over the babka. Try to cover all surface areas and use an amount of your preference. Let the babka cool completely before lifting the loaf out of the pan. If you try to remove the loaf while it is still warm, the babka can fall apart or may break.

Chocolate Glaze Topping: This topping should be started *after your babka has finished baking* and is on a cooling rack. Set your stove top to the lowest setting and melt the butter in a small saucepan. Stir in both the dark and milk chocolate pieces that will melt slowly. When smooth and completely combined with the butter, add the corn syrup and stir. Remove the slightly warm babka from the loaf pan. Gently and slowly peel away parchment from the sides. Spread the glaze on the top and sides of the babka and let the loaf rest and cool completely until set, about 30 minutes.

Storage. Babka will keep for up to 4 days at room temperature or it can be frozen for 2 months. If freezing the loaf, be certain to wrap well.