

Russian Braid from She Makes and Bakes

Makes 2 loaves

Total time: about 3 hours

For the bread:

1 cup warm milk

5 ounces sugar (1/2 cup)

1 1/2 tablespoon yeast

1/2 cup butter, softened

2 eggs

1/2 teaspoon salt

21 ounces all purpose flour (4 1/4 cups)

For the filling:

1/4 cup cinnamon (can sub cocoa if you want a chocolate braid)

2/3 cup sugar

1/4 cup heavy whipping cream

To make the dough, in a large mixing bowl, mix together the yeast, sugar, and warm milk (about 100 degrees). Let sit for 5-10 minutes until foamy. Add butter, eggs, and salt and combine with the paddle attachment. Add in flour and mix until a soft dough forms. Switch to dough hook and knead until dough is soft and supple. This dough will be wet and sticky, but you'll want to avoid adding a lot more flour. Transfer to a greased bowl, cover, and let it rise until doubled (about 1 hour). If you have time, punch the dough down and place in the fridge for at least an hour. If you don't have the time, don't worry. Keep reading.

Combine the cinnamon (or cocoa) and sugar together. Line two 9-inch bread pans with parchment paper.

Divide the dough into two pieces, and roll each piece into a 12x17 inch rectangle. Brush with the cream, and sprinkle the cinnamon sugar over the cream. Roll each rectangle from the 12 inch side into a log. If your dough is chilled, cut each log in half lengthwise. If your dough was not chilled, place the log in the freezer for 10-20 minutes until slightly firm (this will make it much easier to cut and work with).

Take the two pieces and loosely twist together, leaving the cut side up. Place the twists in the parchment-lined bread pans, cut side up. You'll have to squish it in there a bit. Let the loaves proof until doubled, about 30-60 minutes. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 35-40 minutes until browned. Let cool before serving.

Source: Cook Street