

11/26/12 - Challah With Pumpkin and Cranberries

I purchased so many cans of pure pack canned pumpkin puree in my enthusiasm for Thanksgiving and the specials in the market, that now I must think of uses for all of this exuberant purchasing. Pumpkin, a quintessential Fall flavor is great for more than Thanksgiving. Last Friday night I served pumpkin Challah for Shabbat dinner. I infused the moist, bright colored bread with wonderful Sephardic spices like



Yield 2 medium Challah or 12 to 15 rolls

4 extra large eggs, room temperature

1 egg yolk, room temperature

2 packages dry yeast

1 teaspoon sugar

1 cup warm water

1/3 cup avocado dark amber honey

1/2 cup safflower oil

1 and 1/3 cups canned pumpkin puree (like Libby)

8 cups better for bread high gluten flour

2 teaspoons sea salt

2 teaspoons turmeric

2 teaspoons ground anise

1 and 1/2 teaspoons ground cardamom

2/3 cup dried cranberries

1 egg beaten for brushing on top

1/3 cup sesame seeds

1/3 cup pumpkin seeds

Warm up your kitchen to make a good environment for bread rising. Prepare two half sheet baking tins, by lining them with parchment paper, a silpat, or sprinkle generously with corn meal. Crack eggs and egg yolk in a small bowl and set aside.

Pour contents of yeast packs into a glass two cup measuring pitcher. Add 1 teaspoon sugar to yeast, add 1 cup warm water. Measure honey and add to yeast then, let yeast stand for one minute and add oil. Measure 4 cups of flour into mixing bowl of stand mixer. Add salt, turmeric, cardamom, and anise. Mix on lowest setting to combine for a moment with paddle. Add foaming yeast with liquid to flour in mixer, add eggs, add pumpkin puree and mix starting on lowest speed and gradually going up to medium.

Beat until smooth and stringy batter looking. Change paddle for dough hook. Add next 4 cups of flour. Mix again starting on lowest speed until flour is moist and then, speed up to medium and mix dough until it is smooth. Dough will still be a little rough. Flour a work surface for kneading, either wood or stone is preferable. Turn dough out onto surface.

Knead dough for a moment and then open to a rough rectangle. Spread cranberries on dough and roll the piece of dough up. Knead by hand for a few more minutes.

Place dough in a clean bowl, place a small piece of plastic wrap over dough, not tight, and place dough in a cozy bed made of kitchen towels to rise. Cover dough with a tea towel. It takes about 1 and 1/2 hours to 2 hours to rise.

Take Challah (ritual piece removed to make blessing) and remove dough from bowl. Split it in two after forming a log and then form challahs or cut log into 12 to 15 pieces for rolls. Roll each piece into a rope and tie in a knot to form a roll. Place challahs on prepared sheet pans. Cover loosely with tea towels and let formed bread rise again for about one hour.

Heat oven to 350° F. Beat last egg in a small bowl. Using a silicone brush or a piece of cotton ball, gently brush beaten egg all over bread being careful not to press hard and deflate dough. Sprinkle sesame seeds and then pumpkin seeds over dough. Place challahs in oven and bake for about 30 minutes for challahs and 25 minutes for rolls. Remove challahs from baking sheets when done and cool on





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