

Paska (Ukrainian Easter Bread) with Saffron (makes 4 loaves)

Saffron Infusion:

Combine and let steep until cool

¼ c. Boiling water

1 oz. saffron grains

Strain liquid when it is cool

3 c. Milk

Scald and cool to lukewarm

Combine and let sit for 10 minutes:

1 ½ c. lukewarm water

2 T. yeast

3 T. sugar

Separate 6 eggs and set aside the bowl of egg whites.

Cream together:

1 c. Butter

⅔ c. Sugar

Add egg yolks one at a time, blending each in thoroughly

Add to creamed mixture:

Saffron infusion

1 ½ tsp salt

Juice of 1 lemon and grated rind

Yeast mixture

Lukewarm milk

Mix until well blended.

Add 5 c. Sifted flour and mix well.

Beat the 6 egg whites until stiff peaks form. Fold egg whites into the dough. Cover the bowl. Let dough rise in a warm place until doubled in volume.

Once dough has risen, add another 4 to 5 c. sifted flour. Knead until elastic. Place dough in a greased bowl, cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled in volume.

Punch down dough and cut into sections - reserve ¼ of dough for decorations and separate remainder into 3 or 4 equal parts. Shape each section into a round, and place in a round, greased baking pan or glass oven proof bowl. Cover and let dough rise until doubled in volume. While dough is rising, use reserved dough to form braids, swirls, and ropes to decorate the top of each loaf. Before baking, brush tops of loaves with egg wash (1 beaten egg + 2T. Milk or water).

Bake at 325 F. for 30 minutes. Reduce heat to 275 F. and bake for a further 40 minutes. Turn out onto a rack and let cool.