

CINNAMON ROLLS WITH NUTTY CHOCOLATE FILLING

A Writer in the Kitchen with MK McClintock

The original recipe is an adaptation from two other recipes, the sources of which I do not recall, with the addition of my nutty chocolate variation. These are 100% from scratch, but if you want to bypass the extra work, you can use a high-quality pre-made dough and just use the filling and frosting. Be sure to read it through to make sure you have all the ingredients and mixing/baking supplies on hand.



Ingredients

For the Dough:

- 1 cup warm milk (skim, 2%, whole – whatever you have; about 110 degrees F)
- 2 ½ teaspoons instant dry yeast*
- 1 large egg plus 1 egg yolk at room temperature
- 1/3 cup unsalted butter (melted or really soft, but not melted to the point of bubbling)
- 3/4 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/3 cup granulated sugar or coconut sugar (or half regular, half coconut)
- 4 cups bread flour, plus ½ cup bread flour set aside

For the filling:

- 2/3 cup brown sugar (packed; dark or light)
- 1 ½ Tablespoons ground cinnamon
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg (optional)
- ¼ cup unsalted butter (really soft, but not melted)
- 3 teaspoons of all-purpose flour (optional; if you find your cinnamon rolls fall apart, this can help hold that filling in place)

If making the nutty chocolate rolls, you will also need:

- 4 ounces of dark chocolate melted and mixed in with the butter.
- ½ tsp chocolate flavoring (optional; mixed in with the butter)
- ½ cup chopped pecans or walnuts, sprinkled on filling
- 1 Tbs dark baking cocoa (mix with filling; skip the flour if using the cocoa)

For the frosting:

- 6 ounces cream cheese (softened)
- 1/3 cup unsalted butter (softened)
- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 1/2 tablespoon pure vanilla extract

Instructions

1. Warm milk to around 110-115 degrees F. You can do this over the stove (use a candy thermometer) or in the microwave for 40-45 seconds. Do not let it boil or get too hot, or it will mess with the yeast.
2. Transfer warm milk to the bowl of an electric mixer and sprinkle yeast on top.
3. Add in the sugar, egg, egg yolk and melted butter. Whisk by hand until well combined.
4. Stir in 4 cups bread flour and salt with a wooden spoon until a dough begins to form.
5. Put the mixing bowl in place and attach the dough hook.
6. Beat the dough on low speed, adding in up to 1/2 cup more flour if needed to form a dough. Knead for 6-8 minutes or until the dough is elastic and smooth. The dough may stick to the sides of the bowl, which is fine. Don't add more flour!
7. Spray a large bowl with baking spray, or oil the sides with a little butter (I like glass bowls, but stainless steel also works great).
8. Transfer dough ball to the bowl, then cover with plastic wrap (optional) and a tea towel.** Allow dough to rise for 30 minutes to 2 hours, or until doubled in size. The big range is because it can take less time or more depending on the temperature and humidity level of your kitchen. Check it after 30 minutes, but most rises need 1 – 1 ½ hours. If you keep a cooler house, it may take longer. To speed up the process, fill a

smaller bowl with hot tap water and set it under the bowl with the dough, but don't let the dough bowl touch the water.

9. While the dough is rising, prepare your filling by mixing together all the filling ingredients except the butter (or butter/chocolate mixture). Set aside.
10. After the dough has doubled in size, transfer it to a well-floured surface. I like to use a silicone mat for this part, but a tea towel or large, clean surface works great.
11. Flour a rolling pin and roll the dough to about a 24x15" rectangle, or could be as small as a 14x9" depending on big you want the cinnamon rolls. The size doesn't have to be exact, so don't roll it too thin.
12. Spread softened butter over dough, leaving a ¼ inch margin at the far side.
13. Sprinkle your sugar and cinnamon mixture evenly over the butter, then using a spatula, smooth the mixture into the butter, but don't press down too hard.
14. Starting on the either end, again depending on size of rolls, roll the dough up tightly jelly roll style, making sure the seam faces down before you start cutting. I roll starting with the long side to get more rolls.
15. Cut into desired size (9-15) slices and place in a greased 9x13 baking pan. You may want to cut a thin slice off each end to even out the rolls and cut off the bit that doesn't have filling. You may have to use an additional pan if cutting smaller rolls with a higher count.
16. Cover and let rise again for 25-35 minutes, or until double in size. It could take up to an hour in a colder kitchen.
17. Bake at 350 for 20-25 minutes. Baking times may vary depending on your oven, the size of the cinnamon rolls, or pan size, so check after 20 minutes. If they are browning too quickly, cover lightly with foil for another 5-7 minutes, or until a light, golden brown.
18. Remove from the oven when done and allow to cool for 5-10 minutes before frosting.
19. While the rolls are cooling, make the frosting. Using a hand mixer, combine the cream cheese, butter, and vanilla. Slowly add the powdered sugar, ½ cup at a time, and beat well.
20. Spread the frosting evenly over the rolls, and serve immediately. Rolls may be stored in an air-tight container for a couple of days, then they should go into the freezer. When you're ready to pull them out again, allow the frozen rolls to defrost at room temperature.

*There are a lot of great instant yeasts out there. I use SAF-instant because it produces great results every time, but use what you like.

**Plastic wrap helps trap in the heat and moisture, which helps you get the pretty rise out of your rolls. I don't use plastic wrap, but a lot of recipes call for it, so do what works for you. There are a lot of reusable, eco-friendly alternatives to plastic wrap these days.