



THE WAY THE COOKIE CRUMBLES

A FOOD BLOG

English Muffins (completely rewritten from Peter Reinhart's *The Bread Baker's Apprentice*, because his recipes are so darn long)

Makes 6

My dough was elastic, supple, and a little soft, but the rolls didn't expand out so much as just up, so I pressed them down in the pan while they were cooking. This seems to work just fine, although my nooks and crannies were on the small side.

2¼ cups (10 ounces) unbleached bread flour
¾ teaspoon salt
1¼ teaspoons instant yeast
½ tablespoons granulated sugar
1 tablespoon shortening or unsalted butter
¾ to 1 cup milk or buttermilk, at room temperature
cornmeal for dusting

1. Stand mixer: Mix the flour, yeast, salt, and sugar in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook. With the mixer on low speed, add the butter and gradually pour in the milk. Continue mixing on medium-low until the dough is elastic and supple, 8-10 minutes. The dough should be soft, but not sticky.

By hand: Mix the flour, yeast, sugar, and salt in a large bowl. In a large measuring cup, lightly beat the eggs and whisk in the pumpkin and butter. Make a well in the middle of the dry ingredients and pour in the liquid ingredients. Stir the mixture until the dough comes together. Transfer it to a floured board or countertop and knead, incorporating as little flour as possible, for about 10 minutes, until the dough is elastic and supple. The dough should be soft, but not sticky.

2. Transfer the dough to a lightly oiled bowl and cover with plastic wrap or a damp dishtowel. Set the dough aside to rise until it has doubled in volume, about 1 to 1½ hours.

3. Turn the dough out onto a very lightly floured surface. Cut it into six equally-sized pieces and shape each into a ball. Transfer the balls of dough to a baking pan and cover with plastic wrap or a damp dishtowel. Set the dough aside to rise for 1 to 1½ hours; the balls will nearly double in size and should swell both up and out.

4. Adjust a rack to the middle position and heat the oven to 350°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone mat.

5. Spray a large nonstick skillet (or a griddle) with spray oil and heat over medium heat (or 350°F). Place the balls of dough in the skillet with a least 1 inch between them. Cook until the bottoms are very dark brown, just short of burning, 5-8 minutes. Flip the rolls and cook the second side another 5-8 minutes, until it is also dark brown. If, after 5 minutes, the rolls are only golden brown, increase the heat slightly.

6. Transfer the rolls to the prepared pan and immediately bake them for 6 minutes to make sure the center is baked through. Repeat the pan-frying and baking with the remaining rolls.

7. Transfer the English muffins to a wire rack and allow them to cool for at least 30 minutes. For maximum nook-and-cranniness, use a fork to split the rolls instead of slicing them.