



THE WAY THE COOKIE CRUMBLES

A FOOD BLOG

Danishes (adapted from Martha Stewart's Baking Handbook)

I made 18 danishes from this batch of dough, and they were about 3-inches on a side after baking. Bigger danishes are probably easier to work with; many of mine unfolded when the dough expanded during baking, particularly the square shape with the corners folding in.

½ cup warm milk
2 teaspoons instant yeast
10 ounces (about 2 cups) all-purpose flour
3 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon table salt
2 sticks butter, room temperature
1 large egg
1 batch of filling (recipes follow)
egg wash (1 egg mixed with ⅛ teaspoon salt and 1 teaspoon water)

1. In a small measuring cup, stir the yeast into the milk. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine the flour, sugar, and salt. Add 2 tablespoons of butter; mix until evenly combined. Pour in the yeast and milk; mix until the dough starts to look shaggy. Switch to the dough hook; add the egg and knead until the dough just starts to look smooth, 2-3 minutes. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or overnight.

2. On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough out to a 12-inch by 8-inch rectangle, about ¼ inch thick. Distribute the softened butter over two-thirds of the dough, leaving a short end free of butter. Fold the non-buttered third over the middle, then fold the last third over the middle, like folding a letter. Pinch the edges to seal. Roll the dough out to a 12-by-8-inch rectangle again, then fold it in thirds again. Rewrap the dough in plastic wrap; chill 1 hour.

3. After the dough has chilled, roll it out and fold it in thirds twice more, then chill another hour, and roll and fold twice more. Wrap tightly and refrigerate for at least four hours or overnight. (This is a good point to freeze the dough too; thaw in the refrigerator overnight.)

4. Roll the dough out to a 12-by-18-inch rectangle about ⅛-inch thick. If the dough becomes too elastic and springs back, cover it and place it in the refrigerator for at least ten minutes, then try rolling again. Be patient; the rolling and chilling could take up to an hour. Cut 12 to 18 squares (see note).

5. For pinwheels: Cut from each corner halfway to the center of each square. Dab about ¼ teaspoon of filling into the center of each square, then fold every other corner toward the center, pressing to seal. Top with one (for smaller danishes) to two (for the larger size) tablespoons of filling.

For squares with folded corners: Spoon one (for smaller danishes) to two (for the larger size) tablespoons of filling into the center of each square. Fold each corner to the middle of the dough; press to seal.

6. Transfer the danishes to a baking sheet lined with parchment paper or a silicone mat. Cover and either chill overnight or set aside to rise. Heat the oven to 400 degrees. When the danish dough is about doubled in height and is starting to look puffy, brush the danishes with the egg wash. Bake one baking sheet at a time until the danishes are golden brown, 20-25 minutes. Transfer the pan to a wire rack; let the danishes cool on the pan for a few minutes before transferring them to cooling racks to cool to room temperature. Serve within a day.

Cheese Danish Filling

Makes enough for 1 batch of danishes

1 cup ricotta cheese
6 tablespoons (2.6 ounces) sugar
1/8 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon lemon zest
1 large egg
2 teaspoons vanilla
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled

Combine all ingredients. Chill.

Pear Almond Danish Filling (rewritten from Martha Stewart's Baking Handbook)

Makes enough for 1 batch of danishes

2/3 cup slivered almonds, toasted and cooled completely
2 tablespoons flour
1/2 cup (3.5 ounces) sugar, plus 1 tablespoon
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons butter
1 large egg
2 pears, peeled, cored, diced finely
1/4 cup lemon juice

1. In a food processor, grind the almonds, flour, 1/2 cup sugar, and salt; add the butter and egg; chill.

2. Heat the pears, lemon juice, and 1 tablespoon sugar in a medium nonstick skillet over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the pears caramelize, 8-10 minutes. Chill.