

Basic Brioche Dough

Dough Starter (Sponge)

Makes: 19 ounces / 540 grams of dough

INGREDIENTS	MEASUREMENTS	WEIGHT	
		<i>ounces</i>	<i>grams</i>
<i>room temperature</i>	<i>volume</i>		
water, room temperature (70 to 90°F.)	2 tablespoons	1 ounce	29.5 grams
sugar	1 tablespoon	scant 0.5 ounce	12.5 grams
instant yeast (also known as Instant Active Dry, Perfect Rise, Rapid Rise, and QuickRise)	1/4 teaspoon	•	0.8 grams
<u>unbleached</u> all purpose flour, preferably Gold Medal	1/2 cup	2.5 ounces	71 grams
1 large egg	•	2 ounces (weighed in the shell)	58 grams

Equipment: A heavy duty mixer with dough hook attachment. (16) 2 3/4- inch brioche molds, or one 8 1/2- inch by 4 1/2- inch loaf pan, lightly greased with cooking spray or oil or well buttered. A baking stone or baking sheet.

One day up to 2 days ahead make the dough

1) Make the dough starter (sponge)

In the large mixer bowl place the water, sugar, instant yeast, flour, and whole egg. Whisk until very smooth to incorporate air, about 3 minutes. The dough will be the consistency of a very thick batter. (At first the dough may collect inside the whisk but just shake it out and keep whisking. If it's too thick to whisk it means you've added too much flour and will need to add a little of the egg normally added when mixing the dough in step 3.) Scrape down the sides.

Flour Mixture

INGREDIENTS	MEASUREMENTS	WEIGHT	
		<i>ounces</i>	<i>grams</i>
<i>room temperature</i>	<i>volume</i>		
<u>unbleached</u> all purpose flour, preferably Gold Medal	1 cup plus 1 1/2 tablespoons	5.5 ounces	156 grams
sugar	2 tablespoons	about 0.75 ounce	25 grams
instant yeast (also known as Instant Active Dry, Perfect Rise, Rapid Rise, and QuickRise)	1 1/4 teaspoons	•	4 grams
salt	1/2 teaspoon	•	3.3 grams
2 large eggs (cold)	•	4 ounces (weighed in the shells)	113 grams
unsalted butter (must be very soft)	8 tablespoons	4 ounces	113 grams

2) Combine the ingredients for the flour mixture

In a small bowl, mix the flour with the sugar and yeast. Then whisk in the salt. Sprinkle this mixture on top of the sponge. Cover it tightly with plastic wrap and let it stand for 1 1/2 to 2 hours. The sponge will bubble through the flour mixture in places. This is fine. (To suit your time schedule, the sponge can be refrigerated after the first hour up to 24 hours. If you're in a rush you can skip the sponge step entirely but the added depth of flavor makes it worth the wait.)

3) Mix the dough

Add the remaining 2 cold eggs and with the dough hook on low (#2 Kitchen Aid) beat for about 1 minute or until the flour is moistened. Raise the speed to medium (#4 Kitchen Aid) beat for 2 minutes. Scrape the sides of the bowl with an oiled spatula and continue beating for about 5 minutes or until the dough is smooth and shiny but very soft and sticky. It will mass around the dough hook but not pull away from the bowl completely.

Add the butter by the tablespoon, waiting until the butter is almost completely absorbed before adding the next tablespoon. Continue beating until all the butter is incorporated.

4) Let the dough rise

Using an oiled spatula or dough scraper, scrape the dough into a 2 quart dough rising container or bowl, greased lightly with cooking spray or oil. The dough will weigh about 19 ounces / 536 grams. (It will increase slightly in weight after rolling and folding it in step 6.) It will be very soft and elastic and will stick to your fingers unmercifully. Don't be tempted to add more flour at this point; the dough will firm considerably after chilling. Lightly spray or oil the top of the dough and cover it with a lid, plastic wrap, or a damp towel. With a piece of tape mark on the side of the container approximately where double the height would be. Allow the dough to rise until doubled, 1 1/2 to 2 hours.

5) Chill the dough

Refrigerate the dough for 1 hour to firm which will prevent the butter from separating. Gently deflate the dough by stirring it with a rubber scraper and return it to the refrigerator for another hour so that it will be less sticky to handle.

6) Deflate and re chill the dough and allow it to rest (6 hours to 2 days, chilled)

Turn the dough onto a well floured surface and press or roll it into a rectangle, flouring the surface and dough as needed to keep the dough from sticking. The exact size of the rectangle is not important.

Give the dough a business letter turn, brushing off any excess flour, and again press down on it or roll it out into a rectangle. Rotate it 90 degrees so that the closed end is facing to your left. Give it a second business letter turn and round the corners. Dust it lightly on all sides with flour. Wrap it loosely but securely in plastic wrap and then place it in a large zip-seal bag or wrap it in foil and refrigerate for 6 hours up to 2 days to allow the dough to ripen (develop flavor) and firm. (For sticky buns it's fine to use it after 2 hours or until well chilled as there is so much flavor in the filling the subtle difference in the flavor of the dough from longer chilling would be unnoticed.

Pointers for Success

♥ On some mixers there may not be an adjustment to raise the bowl and a dough hook may not work as well for this small amount of dough. If this is the case, switch to the paddle beater.