

Santa Lucia Buns

A Bite of History | December 2004



- 2 PKG. ACTIVE DRY YEAST
- 1/2 CUP WARM WATER (105°–115°)
- 2/3 CUP MILK
- 3/4 TSP. SAFFRON THREADS, CRUSHED
- 1/2 CUP GRANULATED SUGAR
- 1/2 CUP BUTTER, SOFTENED
- 2 EGGS, LIGHTLY BEATEN
- 1 TSP. SALT
- 1/2 TSP. GROUND CARDAMOM
- 5 1/2–6 CUPS ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR
- RAISINS (ABOUT 2 TABLESPOONS)
- 2 TBSP. BUTTER, MELTED
- 1 EGG, LIGHTLY BEATEN
- 1 TBSP. WATER
- 2 TBSP. COARSE SUGAR OR GRANULATED SUGAR

Lightly oil 2 or 3 large baking sheets or line with parchment paper; set aside.

In a large mixing bowl dissolve yeast in warm water. Set aside until foamy, about 10 minutes.

In a small saucepan bring milk and saffron just to boiling. Remove from heat and let cool to lukewarm (105°–115°), letting saffron steep in milk. When milk is lukewarm, stir into yeast mixture. Add 1/2 cup granulated sugar, 1/2 cup butter, 2 eggs, salt, cardamom, and 3 cups of the flour. Beat with an electric mixer on low to medium speed until smooth.

Stir in as much of the remaining flour as you can. Turn out dough onto a floured surface. Knead in enough of the remaining flour to make a moderately stiff dough that is smooth and elastic (6 to 8 minutes total). Shape into a ball. Place in a greased bowl, turning once to grease the surface of dough. Cover and let rise until doubled, about 1 1/2 hours. (Or, cover and refrigerate overnight. Let stand at room temperature 30 minutes.)

Punch down dough. Cover; let rest for 10 minutes. Divide dough into 24 equal portions. To shape buns, roll each piece into a 12-inch-long rope. Place ropes 3 inches apart on prepared sheets. Form each rope into an S shape, coiling ends in a snail fashion. Press 1 raisin into center of each roll. Brush tops lightly with melted butter. Let rise until doubled, about 30 minutes.

In a small bowl combine 1 egg and 1 tablespoon water. Lightly brush buns with egg mixture and sprinkle with coarse sugar. Bake in a 350° oven for 15 to 20 minutes, until bottoms are lightly browned and tops are golden brown. Cool on a wire rack. Makes 24 buns.

TO MAKE AHEAD: Place cooled buns in freezer container; freeze up to 3 months.