

COCONUT CREAM BUNS

“SKOLEBRØD” (SCHOOL BREAD)



Makes
8 buns



This past June, I visited Norway. As an American baker steeped in French and Italian traditions, I came away impressed by the way Scandinavian pastries have absorbed European techniques, reimagined them, and made them their own. Thanks in part to the New Nordic food movement, that tradition is flourishing and increasingly being exported across the globe. In Norway, small bakeries treat pastry with the same care that top chefs bring to their tasting

menus. One of my favorite pastries was Skolebrød. Named for their history as a lunchbox treat, they’re ubiquitous across Norway in cafés, airports, and on kitchen counters. They start with a lightly sweet, cardamom-scented dough baked into soft, pillowy buns, each with a pocket of silky pastry cream and a spoonful of jam, then topped with toasted coconut flakes. They’re the perfect pick-me-up.

- Leslie Mackie

INGREDIENTS:

DOUGH

- 1 ¼ cups whole milk
- 2 ½ tsp active dry yeast
- 4 Tbsp granulated sugar, divided
- 1 egg
- 3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp ground cardamom
- 1 tsp salt
- 6 Tbsp unsalted butter, melted
- Neutral oil or softened butter, for greasing the bowl

PASTRY CREAM & GARNISH

- 1 ¼ cups whole milk
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 2 Tbsp cornstarch
- 4 egg yolks (reserve the egg whites)
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ cup favorite jam or fresh conserve (Project Barnstorm Apricot is a winner)
- ½ cup powdered sugar
- 1 Tbsp lemon juice
- ¼ cup finely shredded unsweetened coconut, toasted

DIRECTIONS:

Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Set aside.

Place the milk in a glass measuring cup and warm it slightly in the microwave (about 60 seconds). Pour the milk into the bowl of a stand mixer, add the yeast and 1 Tbsp of the sugar, and whisk to combine. Let stand for 3 minutes.

Using the dough hook on low speed, add the egg, remaining sugar, flour, cardamom, salt, and melted butter. Mix on medium speed for 5–6 minutes, or until the dough begins to slap against the side of the bowl and forms a loose ball at the base of the hook. The dough will be soft and slightly sticky. The wetter dough contributes to the fluffy finished texture.

Transfer the dough to a lightly oiled or buttered bowl, cover, and proof for about 1 hour, or until doubled in size.

To make the pastry cream, place the milk in a medium saucepan and bring just to a scald over medium heat. Remove from the heat. In a medium bowl, whisk together the sugar, cornstarch, and egg yolks until smooth and slightly thickened. While whisking constantly, slowly pour about half of the hot milk into the egg mixture to temper the yolks. Return the tempered egg mixture to the saucepan with the remaining milk, whisking to combine.

Set the pan over low heat and cook, whisking constantly, until the custard

thickens enough to hold a ribbon when it falls from the whisk. Remove from the heat, whisk in the vanilla extract, and transfer the custard to a clean bowl. Press plastic wrap directly onto the surface and chill in the refrigerator for about 1 hour, or until cold.

Pull the risen dough onto a lightly floured work surface. Pat it into a 12 x 6 x ¾-inch rectangle. Cut into 8 equal squares and arrange them on the prepared baking sheet, leaving about 1½ inches between pieces.

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Let the dough rise at room temperature for about 45 minutes. Using your fingertips, gently press a 1½-inch-wide circle in the center of each square to form a shallow well. Fill each well with about 1 Tbsp of pastry cream and 1 Tbsp of jam or conserves. Lightly brush the exposed dough with the reserved egg whites from the pastry cream.

Bake for 14 to 16 minutes, or until the buns are golden brown.

While the buns bake, stir together the powdered sugar and lemon juice in a small bowl to make a smooth glaze.

Let the buns cool on the pan for about 10 minutes. Brush the top edges with the glaze and sprinkle with the toasted coconut to garnish. Serve warm or at room temperature.