Cinnamon Swirl Bread

This homemade cinnamon swirl bread recipe is a family favorite and only requires a handful of basic ingredients. It's soft and fluffy with the most unbelievably gooey cinnamon swirl inside! See recipe Notes for freezing and overnight instructions.



Ingredients

- **1/2 cup** water (warmed to about 110°F (43°C))
- **1/2 cup** whole milk, (warmed to about 110°F (43°C))
- **2 1/4 tsp** instant or active dry yeast ((1 standard packet))
- **1/4 cup** granulated sugar (divided)
- **4 Tbsp** unsalted butter (softened to room temperature and cut in 4 pieces)
- **3 cup2** bread flour (spooned & leveled)
- **1 tsp** salt

Method

1. **Prepare the dough:** Whisk the warm water, warm milk, yeast, and 2 Tablespoons of sugar together in the bowl of your stand mixer fitted with a dough hook attachment. Loosely cover and allow to sit for 5–10 minutes until foamy and frothy on top. **If you do not own a stand mixer, you can do this in a large mixing bowl and in the next step, mix the dough together with a large wooden spoon or silicone spatula. It will take a bit of arm muscle. A hand mixer works, but the sticky dough repeatedly gets stuck in the beaters. Mixing by hand with a wooden spoon or silicone spatula is a better choice.**

2. Add the remaining sugar, the butter, 1 cup flour (about 130g), and the salt. Beat on low speed for 30 seconds, scrape down the sides of the bowl with a silicone spatula, then add another cup of flour. Beat on medium speed until relatively incorporated (there may still be chunks of butter). Add the remaining flour and beat on medium speed until the dough comes together and pulls away from the sides of the bowl, about 2 minutes. If the dough seems too wet to a point where kneading (next step) would be impossible, beat in more flour 1 Tablespoon at a time until you have a workable dough. Dough should be soft and a little tacky, but still manageable to knead with lightly floured hands.
3. **Knead the dough:** Keep the dough in the mixer and beat for an additional 8–10 full minutes, or knead by hand on a lightly floured surface for 8–10 full minutes. If the dough becomes too sticky during the kneading process, sprinkle 1 teaspoon of flour at a time on the dough or on the work surface/in the bowl to make a soft, slightly tacky dough. Do not add more flour than you need; you do not want a dry dough. After kneading, the dough should still feel a little soft. Poke it with your finger—if it slowly bounces back, your dough is ready to rise. You can also do a "windowpane test" to see if your dough has been kneaded long enough: tear off a small (roughly golfball-size) piece of dough and gently stretch it out until it's thin enough for light to pass through it. Hold it up to a window or light. Does light pass through the stretched dough without the dough tearing first? If so, your dough has been kneaded long enough and is ready to rise. If not, keep kneading.
4. **1st Rise:** Lightly grease a large bowl with oil or nonstick spray. Place the dough in the bowl, turning it to coat all sides in the oil. Cover the bowl and allow the dough to rise in a relatively warm environment for 1.5-2 hours or until double in size. (I always let it rise on the counter. Takes about 2 hours.
5. Grease a 9×5-inch loaf pan.
6. **For the swirl:** In a small bowl, whisk 1/4 cup (50g) sugar and the cinnamon together.
7. **Shape the dough:** When the dough is ready, punch it down to release the air. Lightly flour a work surface, your hands, and a rolling pin. Roll the dough out into a large 8×20 inch rectangle. It does not have to be perfect—in fact, it will probably be rounded on the edges. That's ok! Using a pastry brush, brush the surface with beaten egg white, then sprinkle on the cinnamon-sugar, leaving a 1-inch border uncovered. Roll it up into an 8-inch log. Place the loaf, seam-side down, into the prepared loaf pan. If any cinnamon-sugar filling spilled out of the sides, don't waste it! Sprinkle it on top of the bread in the loaf pan.

8. **2nd Rise:** Cover the shaped loaf and allow to rise for 1 hour, or until it's about 1 inch above the top of the loaf pan.
9. Adjust oven rack to a lower position and preheat oven to 350°F (177°C). *(It's best to bake the bread towards the bottom of the oven so the top doesn't burn.)*
10. After the dough rises, melt the remaining 1 Tablespoon of butter. Lightly brush the melted butter on top of the shaped loaf before baking. Bake for 35–45 minutes, or until golden brown. Check on the bread about halfway through baking—if the top of the loaf is browning too quickly, tent with aluminum foil. To test for doneness, if you gently tap on the loaf, it should sound hollow. For a more accurate test, the bread is done when an instant read thermometer inserted into the center of the loaf registers 195–200°F (90–93°C).
11. Remove from the oven and allow bread to cool for a few minutes in the pan on a cooling rack. Remove loaf from the pan and cool it directly on a cooling rack for at least 10 minutes before slicing. Feel free to let it cool completely before slicing, too.
12. Cover leftover bread tightly and store at room temperature for 6 days or in the refrigerator for up to 10 days.

Notes

- **Overnight Instructions:** Prepare the dough through most of step 4, allowing the dough to rise overnight in the refrigerator instead of in a warm environment. The slow rise gives the bread wonderful flavor! In the morning, let the dough sit on the counter until it comes to room temperature, then continue with step 5. I don't recommend shaping the bread the night before as it will puff up too much overnight.
- **Freezing Instructions:** Baked bread freezes wonderfully! Wrap the loaf in plastic wrap, then a layer of aluminum foil. Freeze for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator or at room temperature, then warm to your liking. You can also freeze the bread dough. After punching down the dough in step 7, wrap the dough tightly in plastic wrap, then a layer of aluminum foil. Freeze for up to 3 months. Thaw overnight in the refrigerator, then bring to room temperature. Once at room temperature, punch the dough down again to release any air bubbles. Continue with the rest of step 7 (shaping the dough).