

My favourite time of year...Hot Cross Bun time!

I get asked all the time if I have a favourite recipe amongst my cookbooks and the answer is always the same...I love all my children equally. While that is mostly true, I do have some extra special feelings for my Hot Cross Buns. Not only are they damn delicious but, given how easy they are to make, I feel totally confident sharing it with even the most novice of bakers because I know that they'll have success. To me that is a good recipe! I also really like a recipe that is only made at a specific time of year, allowing us to truly celebrate and enjoy it without becoming complacent. Consider Hot Cross Buns the Christmas tree of Easter! When the weekend comes to a close it's time to take the buns down and put the recipe back in the box. A rule is rule.

3 1/2 cups all purpose flour	Makes: one dozen perfect hot cross buns
2 packages instant yeast (14 g)	You will need: 9"x13" rectangular pan, buttered and lined with parchment, small piping bag fitted with plain tip
1 tsp ground cinnamon	In a stand mixer fitted with a dough hook or paddle attachment, place the flour, yeast, cinnamon and salt. Run the mixer on low a few times to combine.
1/2 tsp salt	In a bowl, whisk together the oil, water, milk, and sugar. Turn the mixer to medium speed and add the liquid ingredients to the flour mixture.
1/2 cup vegetable oil	Add the eggs one at a time, mixing between each addition. Continue to mix until the eggs have been fully incorporated. Turn the mixer to low and add the dried fruit, peel and zest. Turn the mixer speed to medium-high and continue mixing until all the fruit has been incorporated and the dough is shiny and smooth. and pulls away from the sides of the bowl, about 5-8 minutes.
1/2 cup water	Lightly butter a large bowl and place the dough in it. Loosely cover the bowl with plastic wrap and place it in a warm, draft-free spot. Allow the dough to sit until it has doubled in size, about 90 minutes.
1/3 cup granulated sugar	Once the dough has fully risen, remove the plastic wrap and punch the dough down in the bowl to release all the air produced by the yeast. Turn the dough out on to a lightly floured work surface and allow it to rest for about 10 minutes.
1/4 cup whole milk	Divide the dough into 12 equal pieces. This is easily achieved if you have a kitchen scale. Simply weight the whole pieces of dough and then divide by 12 to get the desired weight for each ball. If you don't have a scale you'll simply have to eyeball it.
3 eggs	Take each piece of dough and roll it into a ball. Cup your hand over, allowing your fingertips to touch the counter, as though you were holding a tennis ball in place on the counter. Roll the ball quickly around in tight circles with your hand still cupped over it until you have formed a little ball of dough with no seams.
3/4 cup golden raisins	Place the twelve balls of dough into the prepared pan and loosely cover with plastic wrap. Place the pan in a warm, draft free spot and allow the buns to rise until doubled in size, about 1 hour.
1/2 cup dried cranberries	Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.
1/2 cup candied citrus peel, chopped	Remove the plastic wrap and use a pastry brush to gently coat the top and sides of the unbaked buns. Bake for 20 minutes, or until they are a lovely golden brown and not sticky in the center. A wooden skewer should come out clean when inserted in center.
1/3 cup dried cherries (optional)	In a small bowl combine the icing sugar, cream and vanilla and whisk until smooth and glossy. Fill the prepared piping bag with icing and once the hot cross buns have cooled top each one with a cross of icing. I like my cross to be pretty thick because I'm a "more icing the better" kind of person.
Zest of 1 orange	
Finishing:	
1 egg, beaten with 1 tbsp water	
1 cup icing sugar	
2-4 tbsp heavy cream	
1 tbsp vanilla	