

Brown Sugar Toasting Bread with orange peel, clove, and salted honey-butter

This recipe is lovingly adapted from my friend Marilyn's Great Grandmother Oehler's Nut Bread, a very simple recipe with only 7 ingredients (white sugar, milk, egg, flour, baking powder, salt, nuts). I've added some additional flavorings and made some tweaks as you'll see below, but the spirit of the bread remains the same. This is a hard, rustic, craggy-topped quick bread, meant for toasting rather than for eating straight up. I slather my toasted slices with honey butter. Marilyn likes hers with butter and salt. It keeps for several days wrapped in foil.

Makes 2 squat (1-1/2-inch high) loaves

For the bread:

Soft butter, for greasing the pans
1 scant cup dark brown sugar
1-1/2 cups milk
1 egg, beaten
2 to 3 tablespoons honey
2 cups all-purpose flour
2 cups whole wheat flour
4 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
3/4 teaspoon ground cloves
Zest of 2 oranges
1 cup chopped walnuts

Additional softened butter, honey, and sea salt, for the salted honey-butter

To make the bread: Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease two standard-size (9"x5") loaf pans very well with soft butter. In a large mixing bowl, stir together all the bread ingredients, except the nuts. No fancy equipment or techniques are necessary here, but make sure the ingredients are fully incorporated, especially any floury bits at the bottom of the bowl. (I sometimes find it easier to whisk the honey into the eggs, but the choice is yours.) Stir in the nuts at the end.

Bake for 50 to 55 minutes, or until a skewer comes out clean. Cool completely.

Meanwhile, blend the salted honey-butter together with a spoon. I make a little at a time, using a ratio of 2 tablespoons soft butter to 1 teaspoon of honey, plus a generous pinch of salt, scaled up as you like. You can always make more later.

When the bread is cool, slice it, toast it, and slather it with honey butter.