

Traditional Cozonac

Traditional Romanian cozonac - a festive sweet bread with walnut-chocolate filling. Perfect for Easter, Christmas holidays with aromatic citrus notes.

1h 30min
PREP

45 min
COOK

2h 15min
TOTAL

8
SERVINGS

Medium
DIFFICULTY

Traditional Cozonac

Ingredients

- 1 oz yeast
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup milk
- 4 cup flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup unsalted butter
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 lemon
- 1 orange
- 1 tsp rum essence
- 3 egg
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 cup cocoa powder
- 2 cup walnut
- 1 cup dry grape

Instructions

- 1 Activate the yeast**

Warm 1 cup milk to 105-110°F (40-43°C) in a small saucepan. Dissolve 1 oz fresh yeast and 1 tsp sugar in the warm milk, whisking until smooth. Let stand for 5-10 minutes until the mixture becomes foamy and bubbles appear on the surface.
- 2 Make the dough base**

Sift 4 cups flour and 1 tsp salt into a large mixing bowl. Create a well in the center and pour in the foamy yeast mixture.
- 3 Melt 1 cup butter and let cool slightly. Add the melted butter, remaining 1 cup sugar, 1 tsp vanilla, 3 egg yolks, and the beaten whole egg to the flour mixture. Mix with a wooden spoon until a shaggy dough forms.**
- 4 Turn the dough onto a floured surface and knead for 8-10 minutes until smooth, elastic, and slightly sticky. The dough should spring back when pressed with your finger.**

- 5 Place the dough in a greased bowl, turning once to coat all sides. Cover with a damp kitchen towel and let rise in a warm place for 1-2 hours until doubled in size.
- 6 **Prepare the filling**
Combine 1 cup chopped walnuts, 2 cups sugar, and 1 cup cocoa powder in a bowl. Mix thoroughly until evenly combined and set aside.
- 7 **Shape the cozonac**
Punch down the risen dough and turn onto a lightly floured surface. Roll into a large rectangle about 16x12 inches and ¼-inch thick.
- 8 Spread the walnut-cocoa filling evenly over the dough, leaving a 1-inch border on all sides. Starting from a long side, roll the dough tightly into a log, pinching the seam to seal.
- 9 Grease a 9x5-inch loaf pan. Coil the rolled dough into the prepared pan, tucking the end underneath. Cover with a damp towel and let rise for 45-60 minutes until doubled in size.
- 10 **Bake**
Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C). Brush the top of the risen cozonac with beaten egg for a golden finish. Bake for 40-45 minutes until deep golden brown and a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean or with just a few moist crumbs.
- 11 Cool in the pan for 15 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack. Let cool completely before slicing, about 2 hours, to prevent the filling from oozing out.

Tips

Proof your yeast in lukewarm milk (around 100°F) - too hot will kill the yeast, while too cold won't activate it properly. The mixture should foam vigorously within 5 minutes.

Keep kneading to a minimum - 5 minutes is sufficient. Over-kneading will develop too much gluten, making the bread tough rather than tender.

Use your hands instead of a rolling pin to flatten the dough for filling. The dough is soft and pliable, and hand-pressing maintains its delicate structure.

Leave a 1-inch border when spreading the filling to prevent it from leaking out during rolling and baking.

Let the shaped loaf rise until nearly doubled - this second rise is crucial for the final texture and ensures the filling stays contained.

Brush with egg yolk just before baking for a beautiful golden crust that's characteristic of authentic cozonac.

Cool completely in the pan before turning out - the structure needs time to set, and hot bread will collapse or tear.

Slice with a sharp serrated knife using a gentle sawing motion to preserve the beautiful swirl pattern without compressing the tender crumb.