

Doña Petrona Making Sweet Christmas Bread

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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J8sU5QCBS9c>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yd308fBrssY>

First part

Good to see you. (I am waiting.) I am going to show you how to make Sweet Christmas Bread, like I had promised. You should take note of all the ingredients that I mention, so that when María Adela goes through the recipe, you can check your notes, *eh?*² To make Sweet Christmas Bread, of about a kilo to 850 grams, because I have weighed it, right, I have 800 grams of flour, in the shape of a crown. You should add a teaspoon of salt over the flour, *eh*, because the salt should never directly touch the malt extract.

[Add] a little vanilla extract, 120 grams of butter until it is all gone. Zest from one lemon peel. 150 grams of sugar. A tablespoonful of orange-blossom water—just a tablespoon. (“A tablespoon Juanita, okay?”) A tablespoon of orange-blossom water. I am going to give you some advice for when you buy the orange-blossom water. They sell it in the specialty stores as orange-blossom extract. You know the little instruction sheet that comes with the little bottle, it will say into how many liters of water to dissolve it. If you pour a spoonful of this in [undiluted], it will burn the dough. You have to water it down.

¹ I would like to thank Thomas Brinkerhoff, Juan Rojo, Geraldo Neto, and Alejandro Vassallo for their help with this transcription.

² Doña Petrona often said “¿eh?” to mean ‘right?’ or ‘okay?’. I have interspersed this term in Spanish with their closest equivalents in English.

If you buy it in the pharmacy, it will come diluted. But in the shops where they sell these products, in the Cooking Equipment Stores, it comes as an extract.

Here I have the malt extract that I wanted you to see. Do you see it, ladies? This allows the dough for the *pan dulce*³ to ferment and stay fresher longer. We use a teaspoon like the ones used for coffee. Can you see it? A teaspoon like the ones used for coffee, not for tea. Just this little amount, no more. Malt extract, a coffee teaspoon's worth, which should never touch the salt. And three eggs. Smaller eggs are better, *eh?* If [the eggs are] not [small], you will not have enough flour. Here I have 80 grams of brewer's yeast, in a paste. I am going to soften it, which I want you to see, in 150 grams of milk. 150 scant grams of milk, scant. I want to point out you should not go past the 150 grams mark.

In this small pan, I am putting 150 grams of milk and adding to it the brewer's yeast. I dissolve it well with my hand, and [then] I am going to put it over the flame to warm it up. To warm it up. ("Light the stove for me, Juanita.") We do not have to do anything more to the dough or anything; I have simplified the recipe and it is [inaudible]. We already have all the ingredients here...Before we made the dough...with this flour, this milk, the yeast, and a little flour. We let the dough rise and we made the *pan dulce*. ("The flame," to Juanita.) 80 grams. Okay. (She laughs. Did you lose the matches?, to Juanita) They have appeared.

³ I have left her references to "pan dulce" in Spanish because "sweet bread" in English can also refer to a dish featuring brains or other innards.

Once it is well dissolved, we are going to warm it up, but not too much, okay? Keep mixing and stirring it while it dissolves. [You should stop] when it is warm, but not very hot, because this would prevent the fermentation of the yeast. Warm, but not very hot. Now it's good. ("Juanita, please turn the stove all the way off.") Now ladies, I mix the malt extract with butter, sugar, [lemon] zest, vanilla, eggs, and I add this milk with the yeast. I mix it all together. Remember that it already has the salt. We have to add the orange-blossom water. ("Juanita, you already put it in, yes...no...") Yes, we already put it in.

You will see how delicious and economical this *pan dulce* will be. I want you to calculate how much the ingredients cost, and you will see how affordable it is when you make it yourselves. You can make it one or two days before Christmas, okay? Now when it is really hot out you can put up to 70 grams of yeast, 60 or 70 grams of yeast. If it is a cool day, you could really add as much as 90 grams, and do not worry that the yeast will affect the flavor at all.

I already have this ball of dough that I am going to make with this lightly kneaded dough. I will let it rise. I mean to say that it should double, expand, ferment. And when it is all set, as I will show you now, then you all will knead the dough a little, [when it has] risen like this, and [then] let it rise a second time.

This is what makes a good *pan dulce*. The more you let it rise, the stronger the yeast becomes, or the dough, I meant to say. If you see the finished dough is lacking some

flour, add a handful because sometimes the eggs are a little bigger. It could also be because you added a little too much orange-blossom water, or that the butter was softer. Just [add] a handful more [of flour] and knead into the dough to finish it.

The quantities of the ingredients are exact. This is something you can all make and have excellent results, with this recipe. I would like you to practice it. You should already start practicing, so that when Christmas comes, you will be able to make *pan dulce* perfectly. I like to stay on television through November to be able to teach you how to prepare recipes for the holidays that are coming soon.

Use the dough to pick up the remaining flour that is still there. Now let's turn to the dough. You knead it a while, without letting it get too cool, okay? Keep it in a warm place, like the kitchen, *eh?* (Host María Adela: "Petrona, while you work, the ladies will watch..." Petrona responds, "Yes, of course. Of course.")

Commercial break

I am kneading. You will need to knead the dough until it is ready, *eh?* I want you to compare the ball of dough that you make, which is large and has been kneaded, with the dough ball that I have here. Knead the ball of dough a little more, okay? ("Juanita, would you get me a bowl?") Make a dough ball like this. I want to show you what a ball of dough that has risen [once] looks like. All right, ladies, can you see it? This is a dough ball that has risen. Nothing more than this. I will break the fermentation. I do it like this

ladies and I will let it rise for a second time, see? (To Juanita: “Give me the other one, the other dough.”)

I will show you the dough that has risen for a second time. (Juanita says something inaudible.) Can you see it? This one has already risen a second time. Now I will add the dried fruit. [Add] any dried fruit that you like. More fruit will make the bread heavier, but more delicious too. If you do not want it with dried fruit, you can add hazelnuts or almonds, and this will be more costly, which I did not want to do so that no one would call me expensive.

Now ladies, I have 100 grams of walnuts. Add 100 grams of light raisins, the Mirnas kind. Here I have 100 Corinth raisins, the dark kind without seeds. There is no need to coat them in flour, but you should remove the stems first because, if not, ladies, they will not mix well into the dough. Here I have two small orange peels, or you can put in one that is cut into tiny slivers. Here I have 100 grams of raisins with seeds. But I have already removed the seeds because they are tastier; they are the kind that give the bread a special taste. I put the raisins here and I cut them up a little.

Second part

Now, look at how I do it. I am rolling it up like this, see, in order to knead it afterwards. I should knead it until the dried fruit and nuts are well distributed and incorporated. You will see that the dried fruit and nuts will come unstuck from the bread, the dough, but this

is because they are coated with a little flour. See this how the dried fruit and nuts fall out. Don't worry as they will stick, becoming fully incorporated. In the parts in which you see less dried fruit and nuts, put those that have fallen out. The nuts should be chopped but [don't chop them] too small, okay? If you want to put in hazelnuts, take out the hard part, the heavy shell, and add them. The same is true with almonds; you can peel them or put them in with the thin dark shell that is stuck to the meaty part of the nut. You should knead until the fruits are very well incorporated. And then you should make the dough into a ball. And you should also let this rise, okay? We are all set with this one that we will let rise...rise for the third time. First, the recently prepared ball of dough, after you will knead it a little and let it rise only....After that with the dried fruits and nuts, another time. And, then, [you will have] the bread, which will have risen four times.

The only work, ladies, is to knead the dough, the first time. [After] that there is not a lot of work, because you only have to knead a little. And after that you do not need to pay any more attention to it beyond leaving it in a warm place. So this bread does not require a lot of work. Okay, so we will suppose that the dried fruit and nuts are very well distributed, okay, and then you will make the dough into a ball like this, and let it rise. Always in a warm place. With a light cover. Now I have the dough that has risen enough to make the bread. Here I have (see?) this ball of dough that I just made, which should look like this, expanded and risen, and now I will make the bread. You will have a bread that is spongy, delicious, with a very agreeable and tasty flavor. I will put the dough ball on a buttered and floured sheet pan. [It will be] ready to go into the oven after it has risen, okay?

(“Give it to me, Juanita.”)

This is how you make the dough ball. Do you see? I don't want to lose these dried fruits and nuts. The sheet pan is like this, buttered and floured. I am going to put the bread here. Tuck [the dough] underneath on the bottom, see? Make sure it is well formed on the bottom. And the bread will stay in this shape.

(“Juanita, give me the bread.”)

(Juanita: “yes, yes”)

See the size that it should be; this is important.

(Anna María: “while Juanita is getting the bread...”)

(“Okay, we will wait, it is fine.”)

The bread [is] ready to be made. The dough ball that you make should be like this, see? You can see that it is covered with a dishcloth. In the beginning you could even put a warm bowl upside down, like this ball of dough here. [Use] a warm bowl so that the dough rises slowly. I already had prepared for you...Ana María will give you the recipe, the ingredients.

TO PREPARE THE SWEET CHRISTMAS BREAD

that Doña Petrona just made

800 grams of flour

150 grams of sugar
70 grams of brewer's yeast
120 grams of butter
150 grams of milk
3 eggs
Zest of one lemon
1 teaspoon malt extract
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 tablespoon orange blossom water
1 teaspoon salt
100 grams raisins
100 grams Corinth raisins
100 grams Sultan raisins
100 grams walnuts
1 candied orange peel

Okay, ladies...when the bread is at this stage we can score it in the shape of a cross, or also like this, in a triangle. I like it more like this. [Use] a razor blade, like this one, that is made especially for the kitchen. More or less the cut should be the depth of a centimeter. Don't let the brewer's yeast ferment too much. When the dough ball has risen, whichever [stage] of the dough you are making, you should move to the next stage. Because if you let it go on too long, the bread will collapse and became sour, bitter; because it has risen too long at any stage. Such that, when it [the dough] has risen, you

should prepare it. Now we will paint [the dough] with the beaten egg. [Put] a good amount into the part you have scored. This cut can also be made when [the dough] has already expanded, before the end of the rising and fermentation process. Okay, now, we will paint it with a beaten egg, a beaten egg. [Break] In order to better maintain its shape, you can use a buttered paper sleeve down here, and I will show you just how to do it so that it comes out right.

(“Will you give me the strips of paper?” to Juanita)

There are also [culinary] molds...to put some metal rings here, the kind that you can buy in specialty shops. Here with have this...Ah, and afterwards we are going to spread it with butter. This paper does not need any more butter. You put the paper loosely around, like this. The temperature of the oven should be low at first, so that [the bread] rises slowly and does not open up too much. A low heat oven so that it rises evenly. And, after that, a moderate oven. At the end, you can give it a hot blast of the oven at higher heat. One hour of cooking, at the most an hour and a quarter, *eh?* This is how loose the paper sleeve should be, (see?), here it is fastened with two clips.

When the bread has risen and is a little golden brown, quickly remove the paper sleeves so that not much air escapes [the oven], [do it] right in the oven door. Now we will coat [the bread] with melted butter. A lot of melted buttered. And put it back in the oven to cook.

Any inconvenience that occurs, any doubt that you have, you all already know that I am at your service. The quick and urgent question, [should go to] my telephone. The complete recipe, by mail.

There you have the bread ready to go into the oven. And it will be.... (“Ah, bring the bread, Juanita, as we are going to show the already cooked bread.”) It seems I am forgetting something. Here I have the cooked bread. Do you see it, ladies? This is the cooked bread. This is exactly how your bread will turn out. This cut, do it a little bigger so that you don’t have such a small triangle on the top. It is much better that you do the cut a little lower. I did it a little high. With the cut a little lower, the bread will come out much better. Okay, ladies, as always I am pleased to be at your service.

(Anna María: “Petrona, watching you work, everything looks so easy. I think that all the ladies are going to make *pan dulce* this year.”)

(Petrona: “That’s because it is easy, it just is.”)

Well then, happy afternoon, [and] good taste!