

Title:

Baking Priest Says Bread Brings Meaning And Tradition To Easter

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572

Summary:

"Bread for Easter is one way of bring some tradition and meaning back to the holiday."

Keywords:

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Article Body:

When immigrants from the four corners of Europe came to America, they brought a variety of traditional Easter bread recipes. Now chocolate Easter bunnies, yellow marshmallow chicks and jelly beans signify the holiday but at one time families served Easter breads, which are rich in symbolism and history.

Father Dominic Garramone, a Catholic priest, cookbook author and host of the TV show "Breaking Bread with Father Dominic," would like to ensure that Easter bread traditions are not forgotten. "Bread for Easter is one way of bringing some tradition and meaning back to the holiday," he says. Here are two of his tried-and-true brunch recipes:

French Toast**Custard Casseroles**

For each casserole, you will need:

1 egg

2 Tbs. whole or reduced-fat milk

2 thick or 3 medium slices of day-old bread (store- bought bread works well)

2 Tbs. chopped pecans

1/3 cup maple-flavored syrup

1 Tbs. butter

1 small ovenproof bowl, about 5" across and 2" deep (a small soup bowl with a handle works well.)

Preheat oven to 350° F. Lightly coat the interior of the ovenproof bowl with cooking spray or butter. Trim bread slices to a shape and size that will fit the bowl. In another larger bowl, whisk egg and milk, then place bread slices in egg mixture until liquid is absorbed. Combine nuts and syrup in the bottom of the ovenproof bowl, and dot the surface with the butter.

Place the soaked bread slices on top-they should not reach past the lip of the bowl. Place bowl on a baking sheet to prevent drips, and place in the preheated oven. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, until top is lightly browned and center is firm. Remove from oven and allow to set for about 10 minutes. Invert bowl onto a plate, remove bowl and serve.

Ham and Cheese Braid

1 pkg. active dry yeast

1 1/4 cups warm milk (100° to 110° F)

1 Tbs. sugar

1 Tbs. vegetable oil

1 1/2 tsp. salt

1 egg

3 to 3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

1 1/2 cups ham, coarsely chopped

1 1/2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese

1/2 cup walnuts, chopped (optional)

1 egg white, beaten with 1 Tbs. water

Put warm milk into a medium-size bowl. Add yeast, stir to dissolve. Add sugar, egg, salt and oil. Add 3 cups of flour and beat well. Work in enough of remaining flour to form a soft dough. Knead for 6 to 8 minutes. Rinse and dry

the bowl, then oil the surface of the dough and place in the bowl. Cover with a clean, dry dish towel, and let rise in a warm place free from drafts for about one hour, or until doubled in volume.

Mix ham, cheese, and nuts (if desired) in medium-size bowl. Roll out dough 10" x 18". Spread filling lengthwise in the center third of the dough; press filling together slightly. Using a sharp knife, cut each outer third of the dough (the part not covered by filling) into 5 to 7 diagonal strips, cutting from the edge of the dough to about 1" from the edge of the filling. Brush the strips lightly with water. Fold the dough strips over the filling, alternating left and right, being careful not to stretch the dough. Tuck in the ends of the last strips to seal. Carefully transfer loaf to a lightly greased nonstick 9" x 13" cake pan. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place for 30 minutes, or until doubled in size. Brush the surface of the dough with the egg white wash. Bake at 400° in a preheated oven for 30 minutes, or until the top is golden brown and the temperature of the filling is about 160°.