

SWEETHEART COFFEE CAKE

By Dorothy Zehnder



2 packets active dry yeast
1/2 cup warm water
1/3 cup sugar
1/3 cup butter or shortening
(plus about 2 Tablespoons melted butter to brush on dough)
2 teaspoons salt
2/3 cup milk
2 eggs
4½ cups all purpose flour

Filling:

1 cup chopped nuts, such as pecans or hickory nuts
1 cup sugar
2 teaspoons cinnamon

Soften yeast in water and set aside.

Combine sugar, butter, salt and milk in large bowl. Stir in eggs and softened yeast. Add flour gradually and mix to form stiff dough.

Knead on floured surface until smooth and satiny, about 5 minutes. Place in greased bowl and cover. Let rise in warm place until doubled, about 1½ hours.

Prepare filling; mix together nuts, sugar and cinnamon.

Divide dough in half. Roll out one part to 15 x 10-inch rectangle on lightly floured surface.

Brush with melted butter. Sprinkle with half the filling. Roll up as for jelly roll, starting with the 15-inch side.

Place on a greased baking sheet. Fold half the roll on top of the other half, sealing ends together. Starting at folded end, cut with utility scissors down the center of roll to within 1-inch of other end. Turn cut halves flat on side, cut-side-up, to form a heart.

Repeat with remaining dough. Let rise in warm place about 45 to 60 minutes, until light to the touch.

Preheat oven to 350°. Bake two coffee cakes for 25 to 30 minutes in oven, or small ones for 20 to 25 minutes. Note: To test for doneness, tap on top. It is done if it sounds hollow. Remove from oven and cool.

For more excitement, frost with icing.

Icing - mix:

1½ cups confectioners sugar
3 to 4 teaspoons milk
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 teaspoon melted butter

Garnish with cut maraschino cherries - about 10-12 little pieces per loaf.

Note from Dorothy: For special occasions like Valentine's Day, this heart-shaped, cinnamon sugar braid is a yummy treat. Can be baked in 2 sweetheart rolls or may be divided into 4 small equal portions which make lovely gifts to share with friends.