

80 Diapers' Tsoureki (Greek Sweet Bread)

2 cups milk

4 ½ t (2 envelopes) dry yeast (not instant)

8 cups bread flour

1 ¾ cups sugar

1 cup almonds, very finely chopped (optional)

1 teaspoon salt

1 orange, zest of, grated

2 teaspoons finely ground anise seed

¼ cup butter, melted

5 eggs, very well beaten

Glaze

1 egg yolk

2-3 tablespoons milk

½ cup slivered almonds

6 hard-boiled eggs, dyed with food-safe dye

In a med saucepan over med-low heat, warm milk. Add yeast, 1 cup of the flour, ¼ c of the sugar, and stir. Cover and allow yeast to “proof” in a warm location for one hour.

In a large bowl or the bowl of a stand mixer if you have one, combine 7 cups flour, remaining sugar, ground almonds, salt, orange zest and anise. Make a well in the center.

Add yeast mixture, eggs and melted butter. Mix well with stand mixer with paddle attachment or by hand, gently combining all ingredients. Continue to mix with paddle for 5 minutes or knead by hand on a floured surface for 10-15 minutes, until dough is smooth and doesn't stick to your hands.

Place in an oiled bowl, covered with a damp cloth, and allow to rise in a warm spot until doubled in bulk, about two hours. Punch dough down and divide into 6 balls.

Roll each ball into a strip 12-15 inches long and about two inches wide. Lay three strips side by side, pinch together on one end, and braid. You can make a long loaf or turn to create a circle, pinching together at the ends. Repeat for remaining dough, making two loaves.

Place three eggs between the "weave" of each loaf, nestling in securely so it will be held as the dough rises.

Place the loaves on a parchment-lined baking sheet, covered, and let rise for two hours, or until doubled in bulk. While the braids are nearly risen, preheat oven to 350°F (175°C).

When dough is risen, beat together the egg yolk and remaining milk. Brush over tsoureki loaves and sprinkle with slivered almonds (if desired).

Bake for about 40-45 minutes, or until golden brown. Check after about 15 minutes –if they are browning too quickly, drape them with aluminum foil to prevent excess browning. The bread should sound hollow when tapped on the bottom.

Remove and cool completely before serving.

(Note—the eggs should probably not be eaten, as they will be incredibly overcooked after being boiled and then baked. They are mostly for decoration.)