

## Thoughtful Food

## This beautiful brioche is shaping up to be a great alternative to regular bread

By Susie Iventosch



This brioche beckons cooks.

Photo Susie Iventosch

We were out for lunch about a month ago and right next door there was a tempting bakery. It was beckoning all during lunch, so after we finished our meal, we dipped into the bakery to see what kinds of goodies they had on hand. The shelves were rather bare, and all they had left were a few loaves of bread and four brioches. Okay then, "We'll take four brioches, please!" (The "s" is silent, so singular [brioche] and plural [brioches] are pronounced exactly the same.)

Since we were planning on burgers that night, I thought it would be a great idea to use these beautiful brioches as buns, and they were fantastic! It didn't take long for me to decide that I should try making my own brioches, and have since made four batches.

The dough is really quite easy to make and the baked brioches keep very well in the refrigerator, but the tricky part is shaping them before baking. In most brioche recipes, there is reference to the "tête," which simply means "head" in French. If you've seen traditional brioches, they look like a two-part snowman, with a larger ruffled body and a much smaller round "head." There are two processes for shaping the brioche like

this, and I have a video link below to show you the two methods. In both cases, you use the side of your hand to divide the dough into two unequal parts, but still connected by a little "neck" or thin piece. Of the two, I prefer the one where you just twist the neck a little bit and rest the head on top, as compared to making a hole in the body and slipping the head through from the bottom. Don't worry, you'll see what I mean after watching the video!

Whichever method you choose, they ultimately end up looking pretty much the same. These little treats are delightful and just the perfect size for a breakfast snack or a dinner roll. When toasted, they are absolutely divine with peanut butter and jam. If you should want to use them as burger buns, I would suggest making them a little bit larger, and making only 12 brioches from this batch versus the 16 called for in the recipe.

Have fun and don't be afraid. You, too, can be a brioche baker!

Here is the link to the "Shaping Brioche" video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U\\_yLixXub-E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_yLixXub-E)

**Brioche** (based on a recipe found at [finecooking.com](http://finecooking.com))

(Makes 16 three-inch brioches)

You will need 3-inch diameter brioche tins/molds for this recipe. If you don't have them, try using a large muffin tin.

**INGREDIENTS**

18 ounces unbleached all-purpose flour (approximately 3 ¼ cups, but better to weigh it.)  
2.5 oz. granulated or light brown sugar (approximately 1/3 cup)  
½ oz. active dry yeast (also equals 2 packets, or 4 ½ teaspoons)  
1 tsp. salt (.2 ounces)  
4 large eggs for dough  
1 egg for egg wash plus pinch of salt  
4 oz. (1/2 cup) milk  
8 oz. (1 cup or 2 sticks) unsalted butter, cut into small, ½-inch cubes

**DIRECTIONS****Make the dough**

Place flour, sugar, yeast and salt in the bowl of your KitchenAid or mixer. Stir with a spoon, or on slow with the paddle attachment.

Switch to the dough hook and add 4 eggs and milk and start mixing on low speed. Stop occasionally to scrape down sides of the bowl. Continue to mix on medium speed for about 2 to 4 more minutes, or until the dough is firm.

Next, add half of the cubed butter to the mixer. Continue to mix the dough on medium speed until butter begins to incorporate. Stop machine and scrape down sides with a spatula and stir any butter into the dough that is left on the edges. Continue to mix until first half of butter is incorporated. Add remaining butter and continue the process for about 4-8 more minutes or until butter is fully incorporated, scraping sides of bowl as necessary. When the dough is ready, you will hear it slap against the sides of the bowl. Dough may be very soft, but that's okay. Don't add extra flour!

**Letting the dough rise**

Turn dough out onto a very lightly floured surface. Knead it just a few times and form into a ball. (You can do this by bringing all four sides into the center and then flip the dough over so the smooth side is up.) Transfer dough to a greased or sprayed bowl, with the smooth side up. Cover loosely with a damp cloth or plastic wrap and allow to rise in a warm spot in your kitchen, but not in the oven! This should take about 1 hour.

When dough is risen to about double in volume, turn out again onto a lightly floured surface and form it into a large ball, again folding all four sides to the center and then flipping over to keep smooth side of ball on top.

**Bench-proofing the dough**

At this point, you can decide whether to allow the dough to rise again immediately, or refrigerate overnight, which is said to make even better brioche. If you decide to make them right away, then place dough back in bowl, cover with plastic wrap or a damp towel, and allow to rise to double again. This is the bench-proofing stage, and will take about one hour. If you plan to refrigerate the dough, cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight. Just remember to take the dough out of the refrigerator and allow to warm and rise for a couple of hours before shaping. This will allow the dough to warm up and to bench proof (second rising),

**Shaping the brioche and making the "tête" (French for "head")**

Spray the brioche tins with Pam or other cooking spray. I have 8 brioche tins, so I make this recipe in two batches.

Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface and shape into a nice, smooth ball again. Divide dough into 2 equal parts. Divide each half into 8 equal smaller smooth round balls, for a total of 16 balls. To shape brioche and make the "tête", use the side of your hand, leading with the long part of the pinky finger cut 1/3 of the way into the ball, but not all the way through. You will have a larger body, with a dangling smaller ball attached by a narrow piece of dough.

Now you can choose either method A or B below: (see video link in article above)

A. Form a hole in the bigger part of the brioche and slip the smaller head up and through the whole. This allows the "tête" to be formed and to remain intact during baking.

B. Or, twist the little neck between the big and small part of the ball and rest the smaller ball in the on top of the center of the bigger part of the ball. Tuck the head down into the body just a little bit.

Carefully, place the brioche, tête squarely on top, into the prepared brioche tins. Cover loosely plastic wrap. Allow to rise (proof) one final time to almost double in size, approximately 1 hour.

Meanwhile, preheat oven to 375 degrees and make egg wash. Brush the tops of the brioches with the egg wash, being careful not to let the egg drip over the sides and into the brioche pans.

Bake at 375 degrees for about 15-18 minutes, or until brioches are dark golden-brown on tops and sides. Let brioches cool for about 10 minutes on a wire rack before unmolding.

Repeat the shaping, rising and baking process with the second half of the dough, if you have only 8 brioche pans.

I have found that these brioches store very well in an airtight container in the refrigerator for at least a week, and they can be frozen, too. Thaw and warm before serving, if frozen.



Susie can be reached at [suziventosch@gmail.com](mailto:suziventosch@gmail.com). This recipe can be found on our website: [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com). If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.

**Cooking Term of the Week****Bench Proof**

Bench proofing (or bench resting) refers to the intermediate rising where you punch the dough down and allow it to rest between the first rising where the yeast grows and allows the dough to leaven, and the final rising after you've shaped the dough and placed it in the pan to rise (proof) before baking. Bench proofing can last anywhere from 10 minutes to a couple of hours, depending upon what you are making.

## Advertising

**Sandwich generation: stuck in the middle navigating tax benefits for children and parents**

March 2017

In 2012, 15 percent of middle-aged adults provided financial support to both an aging parent and a child, according to the Pew Research Center. This is the sandwich generation. They find themselves caring for their parents and children at the same time – and stuck navigating tax breaks for both.

It doesn't take long for first-time parents to learn about the responsibilities – and the tax benefits – that come with parenthood. For example, just by having and supporting a kid, parents can exempt \$4,050 per child from their taxable income. That dependent exemption would save someone in the 25 percent tax bracket more than \$1,000.

And when taxpayers take care of their aging parents, their new responsibilities may come with similar tax benefits.

Life gets complicated, as the sandwich generation knows, and taxes are no exception. Tax benefits can help taxpayers take care of their parents and children, but the rules can be very complex.

**The child and dependent care credit**

Parents raising young children may be able to claim the child care credit, which reduces parents' taxes dollar for dollar for a percentage of qualifying child care expenses while they work or look for work. More than 6.3 million taxpayers claimed this nonrefundable credit in 2014, and with a \$2,100 maximum credit for two eligible children, it can be a valuable way to help offset child care expenses.

But it also could be a way to offset the expenses that come with taking care of one's aging parents. The credit is actually the child and dependent care credit – and for many in the sandwich generation, that could include one's own parents.

The sandwich generation may be paying for day care or after-school care for their child and paying a caregiver to come to their home to help take care of their own mother or father. The child and dependent care credit could help them with both expenses.

Taxpayers' expenses to care for their

own aging parents could qualify for the child and dependent care credit if the parents are physically or mentally incapable of self-care and lived with the taxpayers for more than half the year. Additionally, the taxpayers must be working or looking for work.

The parents do not need to be the taxpayer's dependents for this credit. They do not need to meet the filing status and income questions to qualify as a dependent, but must otherwise be eligible to be claimed as a dependent.

The IRS has an interactive tool to help taxpayers determine if they can claim the child and dependent care credit, but if the situation is unclear, you should talk to a tax professional.

**Medical expense deductions**

If taxpayers are covering medical costs for their parents, they may be able to deduct some of those expenses. The requirements can be difficult to meet though: the medical costs must exceed 10

percent of the taxpayer's adjusted gross income. And for this deduction, the parents must qualify as dependents.

An IRS questionnaire can help taxpayers determine if they can deduct their medical expenses. Taxpayers can also walk through whether or not they can claim their parent as a dependent in a separate questionnaire.

Small changes in your and your parents' circumstances can have a significant impact on your eligibility for tax benefits related to their care. It's important not just for taxpayers to know about the tax relief that may be available to them, but to know how they could qualify with some changes.

*Pamela Marks is an Enrolled Agent for Block Advisors, a new tax firm specializing in complicated taxes. Pamela has been providing expert tax preparation support for more than 10 years. You can contact her at 925-284-9940 for an appointment or at the office at 3390 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette, CA 94549.*