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Irish Soda Bread a perfect staple for St. Patrick's Day

By Susie Iventosch



Sora's Irish Soda Bread Photo Susie Iventosch

It's just so much fun working with fellow Lamorinda Weekly writers who love to cook and discover new recipes as much as I do. Sora O'Doherty is just one of those, and she is always sending me fun recipe ideas for dishes that have caught her attention. This latest recipe she shared for Irish Soda Bread arrived just in time for St. Patrick's Day. It's really easy and so delicious and I hope you all give this bread a try!

Sora lived in Ireland for 14 years and has also visited the country many times before and after living there, so she's sampled her fair share of soda bread recipes.

"Every St. Patrick's Day I see a ton of recipes for white soda bread with raisins, which I never saw eaten in Ireland," Sora remarked. "But Brown Soda Bread is eaten daily. It's very healthy - high in fiber and protein, I think."

She fussed around with her recipe from Ireland to adapt it to American ingredients, and now thinks she's got just the right formula. The main problem with using the Irish recipe is that we have very different flour here in the States, so she had to find the right combination of available flours. For extra texture, she also adds bran, wheat germ, and old fashioned rolled oats. This makes the bread really hearty with a wonderful crunchy crust.

Sora says this bread is delicious with Irish butter, but smoked salmon, and even peanut butter are great on it. Her favorite butter for this bread is Kerry Gold. "I recommend Kerry Gold Butter for spreading on your bread. In the old times in Ireland, you could judge a family's wealth by how thick the butter was spread on the bread for guests," she added.

She also noted that in Ireland you'd eat it for breakfast with eggs, sausages, bacon, black and white puddings, mushrooms and grilled tomatoes. I think you can use this hearty bread in so many ways.

But, for St. Patrick's Day, Sora says that Irish folks favor dishes that have the colors of the Irish flag, green white and orange. So, upon her suggestion, I served my Irish Soda bread with smoked salmon, Boursin cheese, capers and fresh dill for appetizers recently. It was such a big hit and everyone loved it. This recipe will become a regular in our kitchen!

Happy St. Paddy's Day!

Recipe Notes

The first time I made the bread, my dough didn't seem like it could handle more than two cups of buttermilk. But, the second time I used a more hearty whole wheat flour and was able to use 2 3/4 cups of the buttermilk, although my dough appeared to be much softer than Sora's, which made it difficult to cut the X into the dough. So, I'd recommend adding just enough of the buttermilk to get all of the dries incorporated and so you can roll into a ball and make a deep cross using a wet sharp knife.

Sora uses Bob's Red Mill Whole Wheat Flour and I used King Arthur 100% Whole Grain whole wheat flour. If you want to use Irish flour, you'd want to look for Odlums coarse whole meal flour which you can get from Amazon.

I reduced the amount of baking soda on my second batch to two teaspoons instead of three and my family and I really loved the flavor much more with a little less baking soda.

Sora's Irish Soda Bread

(Makes one large round loaf)

INGREDIENTS

3/4 lb. Bob's Red Mill Graham Flour (12 oz.)

1/4 lb. all purpose flour (4 oz.)

1/2 cup rolled oats

1/2 cup bran

1/4 cup wheat germ

3 tsp. baking soda (I use only 2 tsp.)

2 tsp. baking powder

1 tsp salt

2 1/4 to 2 3/4 cups buttermilk

DIRECTIONS

? Butter very well a deep, 8-inch pan. Preheat oven to 400 F.?

? Mix all dry ingredients?thoroughly.?Make a well in the center and add buttermilk; mix well to make a soft dough. ?Spoon the dough into the center of the pan, shaping it into a ball with the spoon. ?Use a sharp knife dampened with water to cut a deep cross in the top of the bread. ?This allows the bread to rise properly and bake evenly, ensuring that the center is baked through. (Such a great idea . maybe we should try this with that darn banana bread that never bakes all the way through!)

? Bake 40 to 45 minutes. ?Remove bread from pan and cool completely on wire rack, then?wrap in a tea towel?or store in an airtight container. Slice thin or thick, and serve with butter or peanut butter, smoked salmon and dill, or with eggs and bacon!







Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: 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. Or visit <https://treksandbites.com>

Reach the reporter at: suziven@gmail.com

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