

Irish Soda Bread

Soda bread is a quick bread that is leavened by baking soda (and baking powder), rather than being yeast-leavened. It's traditionally a free-formed somewhat round loaf, with a cross cut into the top, as opposed to being baked in a bread pan. The technique is the same as for scones (British style) or biscuits (American style), in that the butter is cut or rubbed into the dry flour mixture and then the liquid added to that. In the "kneading" step, try to work the dough as little as possible to get all the ingredients incorporated - overworking the dough will result in a tough loaf.

Ingredients:

- 2 1/2 cups (300g) all purpose flour
- 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 3/4 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp salt (optional - leave out if using salted butter)
- 3 tbsp (38 g) sugar (white or brown, to your taste)
- 1 1/2 tsp caraway seeds (optional)
- 3 tbsp (42 g) butter or shortening
- 1 cup buttermilk* (nonfat used for nutrition info)
- 2/3 cup (100g) raisins
- sprinkle of cinnamon and sugar for topping

Method:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F and prepare a cookie sheet by either lightly greasing or lining with parchment paper.
2. Combine flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt if using, 3 tbsp sugar, and caraway seeds if using and stir or whisk to combine.
3. Cut or rub in butter until the mixture resembles coarse bread crumbs - work quickly to avoid melting the butter.
4. Make a well in the center and add ~2/3 of the buttermilk, stirring lightly to combine. Add the raisins, stir to incorporate, then add the rest of the milk.
5. Knead lightly on a floured surface to make sure there are no pockets of flour - add flour if/as needed. The dough should be soft and slightly sticky.
6. Form the loaf into a rough circle and transfer to prepared baking sheet. Slash the bread twice, in a cross pattern. Brush the top of the loaf with the dribble of milk left in the bottom of your measuring cup and sprinkle with cinnamon and sugar (to taste - I prefer a light sprinkle, but it can handle up to 1 tbsp of topping)
7. Bake 35-40 minutes or until golden and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

*replace buttermilk with vinegar-soured milk if preferred. To sour milk, add 1 tbsp of vinegar to a measuring cup, then pour milk over vinegar to 1-cup mark. Let stand for 5-10 minutes before use.

Nutrition based on (12) 50-gram servings: 120 calories, 3.0g fat (1.8g saturated), 8.0mg cholesterol, 69.9mg sodium, 20.6g carbohydrates (0.7g fiber, 6.9g sugar), 3.0g protein