



Massa sovada/Pão doce - **Portuguese Sweet Bread (1 loaf)**

Recipe by By Jeremiah Duarte Bills and inspired by many including my mother Julie Duarte Bills, my grandmother Maxine da Rosa Duarte, my great grandmothers Angelina Tarvis da Rosa and Maria da Glória Alves Duarte, the ladies of the SPHSS Hall in Sacramento and my *primas* (cousins) in Faial.

This is my favorite food of all time and probably my first food memory. Enjoyed during holidays like Easter and Christmas and during *festas* (festivals) such as *feira do Espírito Santo* (Holy Ghost Festival), it is beloved by all. *Pão doce* (sweet bread) is common throughout Portugal but in the islands of the Azores it's called *massa sovada* meaning “beaten dough” because of its long kneading time.

Sabores (flavorings) and dicas (tips):

Depending on the island, region or baker, sweet bread can be flavored in different ways. My great grandmother from São Miguel used anise. My great grandmother from Faial used cinnamon. My grandmother and mother use a combination of lemon and mace (similar in flavor to nutmeg). During my recent trips to Faial most of the sweet bread I enjoyed was flavored with lemon, nutmeg and cinnamon. Here where I live in Sacramento the Portuguese community is mostly from Pico. They also use lemon, nutmeg, sometimes cinnamon and *aguardente* (Portuguese brandy). I've had delicious versions from Terceira and São Miguel with no extra flavorings. This isn't a definitive list of flavors attached to specific locations it only highlights some of my experiences. It is possible find this bread with or without flavorings regardless of its lineage. This bread is precious and contains stories of history, devotion and immigration.

Feel free to choose from the list below adjusting the amounts and combinations to your preferences *q.b.* (*quanta basta*) and family history.

- 2 tbsp lemon zest (around 2 large lemons)
- 2 tsp ground nutmeg
- 2 tsp anise (you may use the seeds or grind the seeds into a powder)
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon

1 tablespoon *aguardente* (Portuguese brandy) You'll need to reduce the liquid in the recipe by this amount.

On some islands like Faial and Pico some bakers make a **cinnamon tea** in place of the milk in the recipe. This also replaces any ground cinnamon. To do this bring 140 grams (1/2 cup + 1 tbsp + 1 tsp) of water (in place of the milk) to a boil with 2 to 3 cinnamon sticks. Turn off the heat, cover and allow to steep over night. The next day remove the cinnamon sticks and measure the water again to ensure you have the correct amount. Proceed with the recipe replacing the tea for the whole milk.

My grandmother and I always want this bread to be sweeter. You may increase the **sugar** in the recipe to 200 grams (1 cup) bearing in mind that the rise will be extremely long (up to 5 or more hours for both rises). I recommend adding 1 tbsp extra of sugar at a time to learn how the bread will perform before adding a larger amount. In my experience even adding 1 tbsp extra produced extremely long rising times.

If you've been to the Azores, you know the **butter** produced there is some of the best in the world. If you don't have access to Azorean butter I encourage you to buy the richest and best butter you can such as a European style, cultured or grass fed butter. Your bread will truly shine. If you'd like to use salted butter you may. You can decrease the salt in the recipe by a 1/4 teaspoon or leave it as is for some extra seasoning.

This recipe is based on Azorean recipes. There are of course recipes and variations from the mainland.

Equipment:

- Stand mixer fitted the whisk attachment and dough hook
- Digital thermometer
- 1 light colored round cake pans measuring 8x3-inch (20x8 cm) or 9x2-inch (23x5 cm). You may also make two 6 inch/15 cm round loaves.
- Dough rising bucket (optional)
- Bench scraper (optional)
- Bread lame or scissors or sharp knife
- Parchment paper for lining the pans
- Rubber spatula

Makes 1 (8 or 9-inch) round loaf

Ingredients:

Fermento (sponge):

1 tbsp instant yeast
1 tbsp teaspoon sugar
1 tbsp flour

30 grams (2 tbsp) warm water (105F/41C to 110F/43C)

Massa (dough):

140 grams (1/2 cup + 1 tbsp + 1 tsp) whole milk or cinnamon tea (see above)

113 grams (1/2 cup) unsalted butter

100 grams (2 large) eggs, room temperature

150 grams (3/4 cup) granulated sugar

1 teaspoon fine sea salt

454 grams (3 1/2 cups + 2 tablespoon) unbleached all-purpose flour

Any optional flavorings from above

Egg wash:

1 large egg (50 grams)

1 tsp water

Pinch of fine sea salt

Method:

1. In a small bowl, mix the yeast, 1 tbsp sugar and 1 tbsp flour.
2. Add the warm water mixing to create a sponge. Set aside until doubled in volume.
3. Warm the milk or cinnamon tea to a simmer in a small saucepan.
4. Melt the butter in another small saucepan. Keep the butter warm.
5. Beat the eggs, sugar, and optional lemon zest in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Mix on high speed for 1 to 2 minutes until light.
6. Add the milk or cinnamon tea on low speed. Check the temperature of the mixture. It should be cooler than 110F/43C. Add the *aguardente* if using.
7. Add the sponge and mix until combined.
8. Add the 454 grams (3 1/2 cups + 2 tablespoon) of flour, salt and any optional spices.
9. Switch to the dough hook. Beat on medium-low to combine.
10. Once the dough comes together into a cohesive mass, slow down the mixer to low, gradually add in the melted butter 1 tablespoons at a time. Increase the speed to medium until fully incorporated. Repeat this process until all of the butter is added.
11. Continue to beat on medium speed for a total of 8 to 15 minutes (the key is to keep the dough wet and sticky). Check for good gluten development by gently stretching a small piece until it's so thin you can almost see through it. If it tears easily it needs more mixing.
12. Transfer to an oiled bowl or proving container. Cover and allow to rise in a warm place preferably between 90F/32C and 100F/38C until doubled in size. This can take 2 to 4 hours.
13. After the first 30 minutes into the rise, stretch and fold the dough 4 to 5 times to build more strength.
14. Butter and flour a 8 by 3 inch/20 by 8 cm or 9 by 2 inch/23 by 5 cm light colored metal cake pan.

15. Once the dough has doubled, shape into a round.
16. Place in the center of the prepared pan.
17. Cover and let rise until slightly more than doubled. This can take another 3 to 5 or more hours in a warm place.
18. Preheat oven to 300F/150C.
19. Create the egg wash by lightly whisking together the egg, water and pinch of salt in a small bowl. Lightly brush over the surface of the dough.
20. Using a sharp knife, lame or scissors, gently cut a large cross into the surface of the dough.
21. For an 8 inch/20 cm pan bake for 40 to 60 minutes or until the internal temperature is between 180F/82C and 190F/88C. For a 9 inch/23 cm pan begin checking at 30 minutes. To ensure the bread is moist do not over bake.
22. Allow to cool in the pan for 5 minutes.
23. Remove from the pan and cool completely on a wire rack.
24. Serve sliced at room temperature. Store covered at room temperature.