



One recipe for Best-Ever Yeast Rolls will yield three pans of rolls or four sweet-filled coffee cake loaves. Photograph: Charles Walton IV

One Recipe, Three Batches of Bread

In Montgomery, Alabama, Susan Cheek is known for her variety of sweet yeast breads. The secret is that they all come from one recipe of dough for Best-Ever Yeast Rolls, which can be shaped into pan rolls, filled pinwheel rolls, braided loaves, or rolled loaves.

Each recipe of dough makes enough for three of each, or you can bake one each of three of the variations. Susan even provides three cream cheese fillings—cinnamon, orange, or chocolate—so you can pick your favorite flavor or mix and match different flavors with the varied shapes to personalize the breads as you please.

"This is my most requested recipe," Susan explains. "I like to give a basket of rolls and the filled breads along with some gourmet jellies for gifts throughout the year, and I always get rave reviews from those friends and relatives who receive them."

If you enjoy giving baked goodies to friends and family as gifts, then this recipe will definitely save you time. But don't wait for a special occasion. You can bake one pan of rolls or a loaf for your family to enjoy now, and freeze the others for later or to serve for drop-in company.

Freeze the bread in airtight plastic freezer bags. It's best to freeze the baked bread without the Sugar Glaze. Just drizzle it on after the bread is thawed and reheated.

BEST-EVER YEAST ROLLS

- 2 packages dry yeast
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar, divided
- 1 cup warm water (105° to 115°)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter or margarine, softened
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shortening
- 1 cup boiling water
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 6 to 7 cups all-purpose flour, divided
- Cinnamon-Cheese Filling (optional)
- Orange-Cheese Filling (optional)
- Chocolate-Cheese Filling (optional)
- Sugar Glaze (optional)

Dissolve yeast and 1 teaspoon sugar in 1 cup warm water; let stand about 5 minutes.

Combine remaining sugar, salt, butter, and shortening in a large bowl. Add boiling water, stirring until butter and shortening melt. Cool slightly. Add dissolved yeast, stirring well. Add eggs and 3 cups flour, beating at medium speed of an electric mixer until smooth. Gradually stir in enough remaining flour to make a soft dough. Place in a well-greased bowl, turning to grease top. Cover and let rise in a warm place (85°), free from drafts, 1 to 1½ hours or until doubled in bulk.

Punch dough down; turn dough out onto a well-floured surface, and knead several times. Shape into 2-inch balls, and place in 3 greased 9-inch round pans. Cover and let rise in a warm place (85°), free from drafts, 30 to 40 minutes or until doubled in bulk. Bake

at 325° for 20 to 25 minutes or until golden. Yield: 3 dozen.

Sweet Yeast Braid: Place 1 recipe of Best-Ever Yeast Rolls dough in a large bowl; cover and let rise in a warm place (85°), free from drafts, 1 to 1½ hours or until doubled in bulk. Punch dough down; divide into 4 equal portions. Turn each portion out onto a heavily floured surface, and knead 4 or 5 times. Roll each portion into a 12- x 9-inch rectangle. Cut each rectangle into 3 equal lengthwise strips. Spread about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup desired filling down center of each strip, leaving a 1-inch margin at each end.

Fold edge of dough over filling; pinch loose ends of ropes at one end to seal. Braid ropes; firmly pinch loose ends to seal.

Carefully transfer braids to greased baking sheets. Cover and let rise in a warm place (85°), free from drafts, about 40 minutes or until doubled in bulk. Bake at 325° for 35 to 45 minutes or until loaves sound hollow when tapped. Cool on wire racks; drizzle Sugar Glaze over warm loaves. Yield: four 12-inch loaves.

Sweet-Filled Yeast Loaves: Place 1 recipe of Best-Ever Yeast Rolls dough in a large bowl; cover and let rise in a warm place (85°), free from drafts, 1 to 1½ hours or until doubled in bulk. Punch dough down; divide into 4 equal portions. Turn each portion out onto a heavily floured surface, and knead 4 or

5 times. Roll each portion into a 12- x 10-inch rectangle.

Spread $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of desired filling over each rectangle. Carefully roll up dough jellyroll fashion, starting at long side; pinch seam and ends to seal. Carefully transfer loaves, seam side down, to greased baking sheets. Cover and let rise in a warm place (85°), free from drafts, about 40 minutes or until doubled in bulk. Bake at 325° for 35 to 45 minutes or until loaves sound hollow when tapped. Cool on wire racks; drizzle or spread Sugar Glaze over warm loaves. Yield: four 12-inch loaves.

Sweet Pinwheel Rolls: Place 1 recipe of Best-Ever Yeast Rolls dough in a large bowl; cover and let rise in a warm place (85°), free from drafts, 1 to 1½ hours or until doubled in bulk. Punch dough down; divide into 4 equal portions. Turn each portion out onto a heavily floured surface, and knead 4 or 5 times. Roll each portion into a 12- x 10-inch rectangle.

Spread $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of desired filling over each rectangle. Carefully roll up dough jellyroll fashion, starting at long side; pinch seam to seal (do not seal ends).

Cut each roll into 1-inch slices; then place slices, cut side down, in greased muffin pans.

Cover and let rise in a warm place (85°), free from drafts, about 40 minutes or until doubled in bulk. Bake at 325° for 25 minutes or until golden. Drizzle or spread Sugar Glaze over warm rolls. Yield: 4 dozen.

Cinnamon-Cheese Filling:

- 2 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter or margarine, softened
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped pecans

Combine all ingredients except chopped pecans; beat at medium speed of an electric mixer until smooth. Stir in pecans. Yield: about 3 cups.

Orange-Cheese Filling:

- 2 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter or margarine, softened
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup orange marmalade
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
- 3 tablespoons grated orange rind

Combine all ingredients; beat at medium speed of an electric mixer until smooth. Yield: about 3 cups.

Chocolate-Cheese Filling:

- 2 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter or margarine, softened
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate mini-morsels, divided

Combine all ingredients except morsels; beat at medium speed of an electric mixer until smooth. Spread filling over dough, and sprinkle with the chocolate morsels. Yield: about 3 cups.

Sugar Glaze:

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter or margarine, softened
- 1 (16-ounce) package powdered sugar, sifted
- $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk or orange juice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Cream butter; gradually add powdered sugar alternately with milk until mixture reaches desired consistency. Stir in vanilla. Yield: about 2 cups.

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