

# Kanelbullar, Kanelsnegl or plain old cinnamon buns. A tasty treat for a winter weekend



I've always been a huge fan of what I call cinnamon swirls (kanelsnegl, in Danish they are called cinnamon snails), you know, the Danish pastry type treats where a mix of cinnamon, butter, and sugar is swirled inside a roll of flaky, sweet pastry? I love them, but on a recent

trip to New York, we discovered another version, the kanelbullar. Simply, a cinnamon bun, traditional in Sweden. They even have a national cinnamon bun day (Oct 4th), why don't I live in Sweden? I have completely fallen in love with these and have been trying to get the perfect recipe ever since.

They are a perfect treat with a cup of tea or coffee for those cold, fresh winter weekends when you just want to curl up inside with a book and I thin they are about to become our latest christmas day tradition.

The recipe is getting there so I thought I'd share with you guys, and even better, this is a chance for you to practice your sourdough skills on something other than a loaf of bread.

## Ingredients – for the dough

- 400g bread flour
- 150g sourdough starter
- 50g melted butter
- around 200ml warm milk
- 5g salt
- 100g sugar
- 2 tsp ground cardamom (it just give the buns... something which you can't put your finger on)
- an egg to brush the buns

## Ingredients – for the filling

- 120g soft butter
- 100g sugar
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon

## Get to work

You are making an enriched bread dough, so add all your ingredients to your big mixing bowl and get to work bringing it together with your hands until it's a nice ball of dough.

I've found when working with sourdough, that the water content of the starter varies, so don't add all the milk in one go. Add a bit at a time until you have a good dough consistency, you may not need all the milk. You want the dough to be firm but not too dry. A wetter dough makes for a lighter finished product.

Once you have the dough ready, get kneading. Give the dough a knead for about ten minutes until it's soft and springy to the touch.

If you aren't sure about kneading, there's a handy "how to" video over on our YouTube channel.

## [How to knead dough](#)

Once you are happy you have a lovely springy dough, put it back into the bowl, cover with some clingfilm and leave it in a warm room to rise. You want it to double in size, this can take anything from an hour to all day. As we are using sourdough for this recipe, it's more likely to take all day, but just keep an eye on it.

## Getting all creative

Once the dough is ready, you want to roll this out to about 3 or 4mm thick, into a rectangle. Or as near to a rectangle as you can. I have never once managed to get any dough to be a nice neat rectangle without serious coercion, so just get your best approximation of a rectangle.

Now it's time to get the filling ready.

You need to cream your butter and sugar together until its completely combined and super soft, then mix in the cinnamon. This doesn't look attractive in your mixing bowl, I admit, but just trust me on this one, it will taste divine.

Ok, I will not lie to you, this is the tricky (read impossible) bit. You need to spread that lovely filling all over your rectangle of dough. Sounds simple enough right?

Wrong!

Every recipe I've seen, every video I watched, they all spread the filling really easily using a pallet knife or a spoon. I am sorry, but this beautiful pillowy, soft dough does not want the filling spread on it, no matter how soft I went, no matter what implement I used... the dough moved and the filling stayed put.

So... here is my top tip, just use your fingers. It's messy but it works!



So now that the drama of trying to spread the filling is over, time to make those fabulous little knot shaped buns. You start by folding the dough over itself, so basically you are folding it in half, lengthways. Not sure if that is the right description, but basically fold along the short end so you still have a long, but now thin rectangle.

Now cut that rectangle in half to create two squares (or as near to squares as you were to a rectangle at the start).

Then again cut in half, and again until you have some thick little rectangles of filled doughy goodness. Which you are going to cut again, but this time not all the way through, kinda like you are giving them little legs.



Now the messy but fun part begins. Grab the right leg and twist it clockwise. Then grab the left and twist it anti-clockwise.

I have no idea how to describe the result to you, so here's a picture! Make this ☐



The next maneuver is again difficult to explain, but basically take one twisty leg, and wrap it around in a semi-circle. Like left twisty leg goes around the left and joins the top of the dough. Next, take the right twisty leg and pull it over the top and tuck it underneath at the top.

Again, I'm better showing you a picture.



Little knot like buns created, its time to leave them to rise again. You got it, you want them to double in size.

The last stage, when they have doubled, get that oven preheated to 180 C, and while that's heating, beat your egg and brush it over the buns, this makes a nice shiny finish. At this stage, if you wanted to you can even add some sugar nibs to make them pretty.

And voila... tasty sourdough cinnamon buns.



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## An adventure with sourdough

I have been on the most epic adventure over the last few weeks. Well I say few weeks, in truth this adventure started last year but it didn't pan out, so I've chosen to completely gloss over it and pretend it didn't happen. So last few weeks it is, and anyone who says otherwise is a liar ☐ Not really.

With all the bread making experiments I have done, sourdough really does seem like a very natural thing for me to try out, especially given how fashionable "artisanal bread" is at the moment. However, there was always one small detail holding me back and stopping me from really going for it, the sour bit of sourdough. Don't get me wrong, by sour, I don't mean the flavour idea was putting me off. In fact, I love the taste of sourdough bread. It was the sour as in the actual yeast that was putting me off.

You see, the type of yeast that makes your sourdough bread are the very same yeast that I work so hard to get rid of in my house so that they don't spoil my beer. Yup, wild, natural yeast are the very thing you want in sour beers, but they spoil standard beer, plus I don't like sour beers. So as you can imagine, when I had a go at growing a sourdough starter last year, I wasn't really wholeheartedly in it and I think if I'm honest, I gave up a bit soon citing that the time and effort required wasn't worth the outcome. You are about to see that I lied about that too, cause, in reality, it isn't really much effort and the time difference isn't all that a big deal.

## The starter

Sourdough bread is made with natural yeast that are present in the air around us, instead of the shop bought stuff that has been "bred" to be fast acting and give certain flavours. The benefits of using the natural yeast are a completely different, slightly sour flavour and apparently, it is better for us physically. Let me explain.

The downside of sourdough is that it takes much longer to make, and much longer for the yeast to do its thing and cause the bread to rise. It's this slow process that apparently makes the bread better for us, as apparently, this lets nature do its thing and begin the process of breaking down the proteins etc in the bread meaning when we digest it, it is much easier for our systems to cope with. I don't know how true this is, but that's the sales pitch you'll hear.

So, if you don't buy yeast to make your bread, what do you do?

This is where the starter comes in, you basically grow the yeast. Over the course of about 5 days, you gradually build up your stock of yeast so that you have enough to make your bread rise. This is the bit of the adventure I started on last year. I have to be honest though, I binned the starter I made last year because I decided then I wasn't going to bother keeping this sourdough thing going. So for my adventure this year, I bought a little bit of ready-made starter online and grew it. But for those of you who fancy trying this out, this is how I made the starter last year and how I have been keeping this new one alive.

## **To make a starter...**

Grab a large, clean jar or deep dish and add equal amounts of flour and water and give it a really good stir. You don't need much, about 200g of each will do perfectly. Also, the ideal flour to use is organic rye flour as this has a higher concentration of natural yeast.

Cover it with something porous like a clean tea towel and leave it to sit at room temperature, not hot, just warm so don't put it near a radiator or fire. Give it a good stir every day and watch as after a few days you should start to see evidence of some bubbles. 2 things to NOT worry about, you might get a beery liquid on top, just stir it back in, that's natural and you might think it's not worked. Just be patient. It could take 4 or 5 days for you to see any evidence of yeast taking hold (bubbles are a sure sign as is, if the mixture starts to swell). If you haven't seen any signs after a week, just ditch this lot and try again.

Once it has really puffed up and you see lots of bubbles, its time to feed it. This is the bit of the process that scares people the most but not to worry, just think of it like this. You are keeping pet yeast, they need attention and feeding, like a grown-up Tamagotchi.



## How to feed

Very simply, you want to give the yeast a wee feed every day, I just give it 50g of flour and 50ml of water and a good stir every day and that works a treat. If you do this, you'll have a brilliant starter to bake with, in another week's time.

But what if I don't want to feed it every day or bake bread every day?

This is the part that puts people off making sourdough bread, and to be honest, this put me off last year so I eventually just ditched my starter and went back to shop bought bread,

but then recently I started thinking about the fact that this is just yeast... I've learned loads about yeast over the past few years through brewing, so one thing I refused to accept was that I had to feed this starter every day. Why couldn't I just throw it in the fridge so it would go to sleep, then it wouldn't need to be fed so often? That's what I did with yeast for beer. This was my wee experiment... and it works.

## **So here is the method I have worked out**

I only bake at weekends, so I have worked out this cunning plan.

Once my starter was going and looking strong. I binned half of it. I know this sounds shocking but you don't need more than a couple of hundred grams of starter at a time so there is no point building up huge amounts of this stuff if you aren't going to use it. So once it's looking healthy, grit your teeth and chuck out about half. Then add 50g of flour and water, mix it well and put it in the fridge.

This is the bit that most people are shocked by, but yeast slows down in the cold, eats less sugar, a bit like it goes into hibernation. You can revive it again by warming it up. Now the important thing to remember here is that you can't just put it in the fridge and ignore it for months. You will still have to feed it, but just much less regularly.

So this is how I do things, I only bake at the weekend, so I get my starter out of the fridge on Tuesday night and leave it on the worktop to let it come up to room temperature.

On Wednesday and Thursday morning, I feed it with 50g of flour and 50ml of water and give it a good stir.

On Friday morning I make what is called a sponge, this is essentially a super-powered starter to get your bread off to a good start. I add 150ml of the bubbling starter to my big mixing bowl and then mix in 250g flour and 275ml warm water. Give this a really good stir. It makes a slightly thicker mix, I cover it with clingfilm and leave it on the kitchen worktop and go off to work.

On Friday evening, I turn this sponge into my bread dough by adding 300g more flour, 30ml of oil and 10g of salt and giving it a good mix and then a good knead for about 10 minutes.

This is now your bread dough, just like any dough you have made for baking bread before, except it will just be much slower to do its thing. So I leave it for another two to three hours to begin to rise and then before bed, I punch it down, give it another shorter knead and then shape it.

Now to help it keep its shape on the second rise, it's much easier if you have a baking basket or a shallow bowl. basically, line this with a clean tea towel liberally dusted with flour and drop your shaped ball of dough into this to rise. Put the seam (messy side) up so that when you turn the dough out, this is on the bottom.

I then cover this with a tea towel and go to bed, the yeast will do its thing overnight, giving you a lovely loaf of bread to cook in the morning.

220C (fan) for 40 mins.

## **It's not just for your daily loaf**

Although most often you'll hear sourdough spoken about in terms of a loaf of bread, it works great for pizza, flat breads, rolls etc too. I've even seen a Swedish bakery selling sourdough scones.



Give it a try. Everyone needs a little bit me adventure sometimes.